



ROCK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Highways & Parks

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Public Works Committee Meeting – Parks
Tuesday, July 9, 2024 – 8:00 a.m.
Public Works Department – Committee Room
3715 Newville Road
Janesville, WI 53545

Call to Order: Chair Mawhinney called the meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 8:00 a.m.

Committee Members Present: Supervisors Homan, Mawhinney, Pennycook, and Woodman

Committee Members Absent: Supervisor Sutter

<u>Staff Members:</u>	Duane Jorgenson	Public Works Director
	Nick Elmer	Assistant Director Public Works Director
	John Traynor	Park Services Supervisor
	Amy Friend	Parks Community Coordinator
	Amanda McElroy	Administrative Professional II

<u>Others Present:</u>	Chuck Flynn	Citizen (attended in person and on Zoom)
	Michelle DeRubeis	Department of Public Works (Zoom)
	Neil Pierce	Department of Public Works
	Carl Lange	Friends of Rock County Parks
	Carolyn Brandeen	League of Women Voters
	Floyd Finney	Parks Advisory Board
	Dean Paynter	Parks Advisory Board
	Tom Presny	Parks Advisory Board
	Cathy Schneider	Rock River Heritage Park Friends

Approval of Agenda: Supervisor Woodman moved approval of the agenda as presented, seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

Approval of Minutes Dated June 11, 2024: Supervisor Homan moved approval of the minutes from June 11, 2024, as presented, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

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Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements: A public comment regarding the future of the Gibbs Lake rental house, submitted by Tom Presny, was read aloud.

Mr. Traynor shared an article from the National Recreation and Park Association with the Committee (see attachment).

Mr. Traynor also discussed an article that was featured in Mammoth Tales, published by the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Two active volunteers, Dennis James (6,000 hours), and Dean Paynter (3,000 hours) received awards for their volunteer hours.

Parks Advisory Board Communications: Mr. Presny spoke about the periodical cicadas in Rock River Heritage Park and passed around tree branches where the female cicadas have laid their eggs. Many of these branches have fallen off the trees. Mr. Traynor added that hundreds of oak trees in the park have been affected and hopes there will be no long-term damage. Supervisor Mawhinney requested that this information be shared at a County Board Meeting.

Mr. Jorgenson announced that the Department has finished tornado clean-up.

REVIEW, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION

Discussion and Possible Action – Issue Paper – Gibbs Lake House Rent: Mr. Traynor provided an overview, explaining that the Gibbs Lake rental house has had the same renter and there have been minimal repairs to the property. He recommended the rent be increased 2.5%, which would total \$950/month, and be equal to what the Airport is charging for their rental house. Mr. Traynor shared a PowerPoint presentation with information and photographs of the Gibbs Lake rental house and answered questions from the Committee. Mr. Traynor suggested renewing the contract for this year and the following year, but if the current tenant leaves, the property would not be rented out again.

Mr. Presny shared his thoughts about ending the rental in the future and using the land to create a public access parking lot for the park. Discussion was had about establishing a timeline for the termination of this contract, contingent on approval by Corporation Counsel.

Supervisor Woodman moved to postpone the Issue Paper until the September Parks Meeting, seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

Discussion and Possible Action – 2025 Fee Schedule: Mr. Traynor shared he is not proposing any changes to the current fees as they are comparable with others in the surrounding area.

Mr. Presny questioned if the fees are too high for Heritage Hall. Mr. Traynor recommended keeping the current fees for another year and working to get the word out as other rental venues of similar size charge more. Discussion was had about possibly implementing a rate for small groups, but it is costly and time consuming to prepare the large venue for events.

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Supervisor Woodman moved to approve the 2025 Fee Schedule with no changes, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

Discussion and Possible Action – Issue Paper – Approval of GPS Contract: Mr. Jorgenson explained that the Department currently uses Precise MRM software to provide GPS monitoring and data for our fleet. Precise MRM has not done any software updates and relies solely on GPS positioning, which is not as accurate or reliable as software that ties into the electronic controls of equipment. Mr. Jorgenson shared pictures that highlighted these inconsistencies. Mr. Jorgenson noted that GPS software helps the Department confirm or deny claims quickly and track the location of equipment.

Another vendor, Samsara, offers software that is more thorough, user-friendly, and has video. The Samsara contract proposes adding 12 dash cameras, increasing the GPS monitoring by 13 fleet assets, and adding 86 unpowered fleet assets. The cost to switch to Samsara would be \$21,918 for the remainder of this year, \$68,276.00/year for five years, and includes the hardware costs. Actual video footage was shared to show the video quality and the type of situations staff encounter in the field.

Mr. Pierce explained that Samsara provides live data and codes from the equipment. Mr. Jorgenson added that Dane County currently uses Samsara, while Walworth County, Jefferson County, and the City of Beloit are looking into using them.

Supervisor Woodman moved the Issue Paper, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.

Discussion – Staffing Update: Mr. Jorgenson shared that there have been no additional resignations. There were 17 applicants for the vacant highway positions, eight were selected for interviews, and six completed an interview. Of those six, four applicants were selected for the positions, but one had to pull out for personal reasons. The Department is hoping to fill three of the eight vacancies. Mr. Jorgenson added that these positions were posted May 6, and the potential hires would likely start on August 5. One of the new Accounting Specialists started on June 24 and the second one starts on July 22.

Mr. Traynor added that the Parks Department has two open positions, but he has been given the direction to not hire the Parks Assistant position at this time. The Parks Maintenance position closed over a month ago and there were eight applicants, five of which were selected for interviews. Mr. Traynor has not heard anything further.

Parks Report – See Attached: Mr. Traynor and Ms. Friend shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting items in their report and answered questions from the Committee.

Parks General

- Maintenance Update – Mowing- trying to keep up with mowing
- Storm Damage – Lee, Carvers, PTNT- a lot of damage, trails are cleared
- Budget Meeting – August 1- joint Committee Meeting at 6pm at the Department of Public Works Conference Room

Beckman Mill

- Mill Tours – Saturday & Sunday from 1-4 P.M. (May – October)- run by volunteers
- Bat issue in the Mill- hired Orkin to relocate bats from the mill to a bat house
- FOBM – Ice Cream Social & Artists in the Park – July 21- includes tours, artists, ice cream, and kids activities from 12pm-4pm
- The Little Ice Cream Truck StoryWalk® - July 19- August 2- submit a photo to win a prize
- Popsicles in the Park – August 1- yard games and free popsicles from 11am-12pm

Carver-Roehl

- Pavilion - Roof Donation and Repair- thanked the Friends of Carver-Roehl for the donation to pay for the new roof
- Storm Clean up – Trails, Culverts- cleaned up substantial damage after the storm

Happy Hollow Park

- Pier Issues- due to the high water and wind, some aluminum pier panels are missing

Magnolia Bluff Park

- Wednesday Walk – June 26- attended by 30 people
- Shelter Rental Status- lots of use, may be able to use a generator for electricity in the future
- Trail Cleanup- still have some cleanup from the storm to complete

Royce Dallman Park

- High Water- pier has been removed due to high water and winds
- Parking Lot Repair- deterioration of parking lot due to high water, one picnic table is missing and may have floated away
- Pier Re-placement- will put the pier back in when water recedes and it is safe for staff to do so

Rock River Heritage Park

- Cicada Update- mostly gone, tree defoliation left behind
- WTA Picnic – July 18th- Wisconsin Towns Association Picnic at Heritage Hall
- Pumping Permit Status- DNR will not meet until the water recedes
- Trail Work – Update- widened and cleaned up, roots still there

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Sweet Allyn Park

- Shopiere Days – June 21-23- successful and well attended despite the rainy weather

Sportsman Park

- The Cow Who Climbed A Tree StoryWalk® - June 20- July 4- over 25 participants
- Popsicles At The Park – June 27- yard games and free popsicles, over 20 participants
- Shelter Design Status Update- Parkitecture will finish the design, unsure when it will be built due to the budget

Other Events

- July – National Park & Recreation Month- theme is “Where You Belong”
- Rock County Parks July Photo Challenge – July 1-31- share park photos to win prizes
- Rock County 4-H Fair – July 23-28- booth is located underneath the Grandstand
- RTC – Pedal The Peace Trail – July 27
- Wednesday Walk – Lee Park – July 31- led by Jim Hessenauer
- Wednesday Walk – Rock River Heritage Park – August 7- led by Carl Lange

Next Meeting Date and Time:

Highway Meeting: Tuesday, July 23, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.

Parks Meeting: Tuesday, August 13, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.

Adjournment: Supervisor Homan moved adjournment at 9:27 a.m., seconded by Supervisor Woodman. ADOPTED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda McElroy, Administrative Professional II

Investing in Health Through Parks and Recreation

By Austin Barrett, Ph.D., CPRP

Parks and recreation increasingly is seen as an essential component of the healthcare system. For readers of *Parks & Recreation* magazine, this connection is no surprise. But how widely is that perception held among the broader population?

The Perception

One answer comes from a 2017 research paper (tinyurl.com/4szkbpxx). Using a statewide survey of 2,240 responses, researchers in Pennsylvania found that 73 percent of residents agreed with the statement, “Parks, trails and open space are an essential component of our healthcare system.” Sixty-eight percent agreed with the same statement in a separate survey conducted with 243 patients in a Pennsylvania primary care clinic. These views were shared across different demographic categories; the researchers found no difference in level of agreement based on age, race and income. Only minor differences in agreement were identified based on gender (females agreed at a higher rate than males) and education (college degree holders agreed at a higher rate than non-college degree holders). The results indicate a recognition among the public that parks, trails and open spaces have a place at the health promotion table.

The Evidence

Using nationwide data, two research studies tested the relationship between county-level spending on park and recreation operations and specific health outcomes.

The first study (tinyurl.com/ycxvxayr) examined how operational spending on parks and recreation re-

lated to mortality in the United States. They wanted to know: Does an increase in spending on local parks and recreation relate to a decrease in mortality rate? Yes, it does — increased county-area spending on parks and recreation was associated with a decrease in overall mortality from 1980 to 2010.

A second study (tinyurl.com/yzm5xju5) examined the relationship between local government spending on parks and recreation and how people describe their own health (such as excellent, very good, good, fair or poor). Researchers analyzed a nationwide public dataset of more than 300,000 responses to see if increased spending on parks and recreation was associated with a decreased number of people rating their health as “poor.” The answer: Yes, again! Higher levels of county-area park and recreation spending was associated with lower likelihood of participants describing their health as “poor.” The analyses also included other local government spending on traditional healthcare categories, such as health, welfare and hospitals, to avoid bias. Further, out of all included government spending variables, parks and recreation was the only variable associated with better self-rated health.

Finally, the Community Preventive Services Task Force recently released a finding (tinyurl.com/59dz6j3e) showing how health-related economic benefits exceed the cost for park, trail and greenway infrastructure. The systematic review, that soon will be published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, identified seven research studies that quantified the economic value of a park, trail and other greenway infrastructure development. The review found that every dollar spent on these projects led to \$3.10 worth of health-related benefits. NRPA will share more information about this article upon publication.

Data Talks

NRPA also provides ways to measure the impact of parks and recreation on health. Check out the Annual Health Care Cost Benefit of Equitable Access to Parks calculator (tinyurl.com/4au96uad) to see the amount of annual healthcare savings in your city when all residents have nearby access to parks.

Understanding and communicating some of these findings will help make the case for continued support for and investment in local park and recreation services. Data are crucial for communicating benefits to local decision-makers. It's time to amplify the message that an investment in local park and recreation services is an investment in local health and well-being.

For more research-informed statements on the multitude of benefits provided by parks and recreation, visit NRPA's Parks and Recreation Is Essential webpage (nrpa.org/Essential). 

Austin Barrett (he/him), Ph.D., CPRP, is Senior Evaluation Manager at NRPA (abarrett@nrpa.org).