

PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING January 18, 2024
MINUTES

The January 18, 2024, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:30 p.m.

Attendees: Council Member Justin McCarthy, Committee Members Zachary Michalk, Mary Sue Simmons, Jennifer Arsenault, and Alan Mitchell.

Others: Barton Winter, Ryan Hankins, and Sherry Hankins

Agenda. The Committee voted unanimously to add two items to the agenda, at the end:

Discussion of the park signs

Discussion of the expiration of terms for Mitchell and Simmons.

Public Forum. Chair Michalk recognized Barton Winter for five minutes. Winter expressed concern about the skating rinks. He said the hockey rink is now open but not the pleasure rink. He stated that the pleasure rink may be smaller this year or may not even be available. Winter was concerned about the chain of command regarding flooding of the rinks. He said that last Sunday the ice on the hockey rink was thin and that more ice was needed to survive the warm weather expected next week. He would like to see more specifics on flooding – timing and weather conditions. Winter said he would like to see the pleasure rink completed this year. He mentioned that snow has been left on the hockey rink and that needs to be removed. Winter said he has been communicating with the Mayor about his issues. Winter also asked that he be authorized to flood the rinks.

Sherry Hankins expressed her thanks for the City installing the hand rail on Owl Street. The Committee thanked her for expressing her gratitude. The Hankinses left the meeting.

Conservation Initiatives. There were no initiatives to report.

Planning for Tighe-Schmitz Park. Simmons reported that Lori Tella of the Washington Conservation District would like to attend our February committee meeting to discuss ideas for the Tighe-Schmitz Park and would probably also bring along a colleague from the Rice Creek Watershed District. Simmons added that Tella had asked whether the Committee would only be soliciting ideas from the public at the forum, or would the Committee actually be proposing something. The Committee discussed that the cost of any proposal that was made would be a

big issue. McCarthy stated that the Council has heard concerns from residents about the City budget and that there were other projects needing attention, like roads and the lift station, that would require funding. The Committee agreed that it would be necessary to explore grant options for any projects at Tighe-Schmitz. The Committee also discussed the option of using some of the funds in the Special Revenue Fund for a project undertaken at Tighe-Schmitz.

The Committee decided that at its February meeting, it would ask Lori Tella to help the Committee set priorities for Tighe-Schmitz Park. The Committee determined that at the spring public forum, it would like to both present some ideas for improving the park and also solicit comments and suggestions from the public. The Committee also discussed the timing of the public forum, probably sometime in April or May, and thought it would be important to set the date soon so an announcement can be included in the City's Spring Newsletter.

Community Outreach Michalk handed out a document he prepared listing possible topics for the Spring Newsletter. The Newsletter will come out in March and will have a full page of material related to the parks. Committee members volunteered to draft a short summary for each of the topics. These drafts will be finalized at the February meeting.

Here are the topics to be included in the Newsletter and the person putting the draft together.

- 1) Recommendations and Remedies for Water Conservation.
 - a) *Include reminders on current laws regulating watering lawns, garden beds, etc.*
 - b) *Offer recommendations on other best practices*

Simmons agreed to draft the write-up on this issue.

- 2) Tighe-Schmitz Open House Public Forum
 - a) *Confirm date, purpose of the open forum, and goals*
 - b) *Lori Tella from Washington Conservation District will attend and support*

Simmons also agreed to write up the draft of this issue. The Committee expects that the date of the Public Forum will be announced in the Newsletter.

- 3) Clean Up Day
 - a) *Confirm date(s) this will occur*

The Committee discussed the importance of setting the date for the spring cleanup so this information can be included in the spring Newsletter. There was discussion about how the cleanup day should proceed, including involving the Dock

Association, perhaps arranging for waste collection and disposal, and identifying specific tasks to complete. Simmons mentioned that the air conditioning unit at city hall could use some cleanup and might be a project for cleanup day. Michalk agreed to prepare the draft describing this matter.

4) Birchwood Village's New Volunteer Initiative

- a) Jen's spreadsheet – where will that be on city's webpage*
- b) Ideas for projects that we can include in the spreadsheet*
- c) Have it uploaded onto the city website before newsletter goes out*

Arsenault created the spreadsheet and will follow up on these tasks and prepare the draft write-up.

5) New Rules at Kay Beach

- a) Offer a short callout for new rules the city passed for Kay Beach*

The Committee recognized the importance of announcing to residents that under the new ordinance adopted by the Council, dogs will no longer be permitted at Kay Beach. Arsenault agreed to write up this topic.

6) City Ordinance Updates and New Signs

- a) High-level overview of the city ordinance updates the parks committee worked on*
- b) New signs will be going up at all of the beaches and parks (highlight as an achievement from the committee and maybe include a picture, if available).*

This topic is related to topic 5 so Arsenault agreed to draft language about the new signs. Mitchell agreed to help with the discussion about the ordinance changes approved by the Council

7) Others?

No other topics were identified.

Visual Mitigation of the Lift Station Generator.

McCarthy said the Council should have a plan at its February meeting for replacement of the actual lift station, but the generator will not be replaced. It will be some time before that work on the lift station will be undertaken so there is no rush to decide what to do about improving the aesthetics of the generator. The Committee will revisit this matter at its February meeting.

General Maintenance

There was no new discussion about general park maintenance.

Volunteer Initiatives

Arsenault reported that the spreadsheet showing volunteer opportunities is done. McCarthy asked Arsenault to email the spreadsheet to the City Administrator and ask her to include on the February Council agenda a request to approve posting the spreadsheet on the city webpage.

Management of Ice/Flooding at the Hockey Rink

Winter said that an email from Council member Weier explaining the delay in getting the rinks ready was helpful. The Committee recognized that Birchwood is right in the ballpark for getting its rinks open this season, compared to what other cities have done, given the warm weather. Michalk mentioned that the City Administrator had sent out an email setting forth the guidelines for flooding the rink and the rules for use of the rink. Winter said he hadn't seen them, and Michalk said he would provide him with the email. (Note: the Rules were not specifically identified at the meeting but are included at the end of the Minutes for the reader's convenience.) The Committee thanked Winter for his help in funding and replacing boards at the rink.

Beach Easements

There was nothing new to discuss regarding maintenance of the beaches.

Update on Hall's Marsh MOA

McCarthy informed the Committee that the City had received a response from the Rice Creek Watershed District regarding the issues raised by the Council. Discussions between the City and the RCWD are still continuing. Michalk asked what the role of the Parks Committee is in this matter. The Committee was of the view that it didn't need to be involved in the City's negotiations but appreciated being kept informed.

Park Signs.

McCarthy asked the Committee to send the City Administrator the quotes for the cost of the new signs that the Committee had received and to ask the Administrator to place authorization of the expenditure on the next council agenda. The Committee discussed how many signs will be ordered and decided that there would be one sign at each of the beaches and two signs at Bloomquist Park and Tighe-Schmitz Park.

Winter said that he would like to see the hockey rink be called the Ollie Washburn Rink, in recognition of Washburn's significant financial donations and actions in creating the rink. Winter said that he would provide committee members with information about Washburn's involvement. The Committee indicated it would consider the matter at its February meeting. The Committee thanked Winter for an offer he made in an email to the Committee to contribute an additional \$100 for replacing worn out boards on the hockey rink. Mitchell moved that the Committee recommend that the City accept Barton Winter's offer to make a second gift of \$100 to the City for the new boards. Arsenault seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Committee Member Terms.

Simmons and Mitchell were appointed to one-year terms in February 2023 and their terms were about to expire. Both have indicated that they would seek reappointment to a second term. McCarthy said that he would bring the matter of their reappointment to the Council at its February meeting.

The Council also discussed the absence of Amy Hulett, who has not appeared at any regular monthly meetings or had any contact with committee members since she was appointed in October, 2023. The Committee thought that this position on the Committee should be filled by somebody else. McCarthy said he would bring the matter to the attention of the full City Council and ask the Council to declare the position vacant and solicit new applicants.

Confirm Next Month's Meeting and Identify Agenda Topics. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in city hall. Several agenda topics are described above in the Minutes.

Adjourn. 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary

RINK RULES

RINK HOURS--Daylight to 9pm

WARMING HOUSE HOURS--5 pm to 9pm

WARMING HOUSE WINDOW LOCKS ARE CHECKED—Do not unlock!

RINK FLOODING TIMES OCCUR—early morning and/or after 9pm

BEST TIMES FOR FLOODING ARE---10 degrees Fahrenheit to 25 degrees Fahrenheit

SKATING RULES

DO NOT SKATE ON ICE WHEN IT IS SLUSHY

DO NOT SKATE ON ICE AFTER FLOODING

DO NOT SALT SIDEWALK OR ANYWHERE ON RINK

VOLUNTEERS MAY

Shovel—anytime, especially before 9PM

NOTE—All of these occurrences are weather dependent

THANK YOU!

Birchwood City Hall

Updated on January 9, 2024