**MARION PARK BOARD MINUTES**

October 14, 2020, 4:00 P.M.

Thomas Park Administration and Operations Facility

ROLL CALL: Chair Patty Wise, John McIntosh, Amy Hussel, Kyle Martin, Bryan Fiscus

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Seth Staashelm, Karlene Hummel, Darcie Coberly

GUESTS: City Manager Lon Pluckhahn, Budget Manager Zachary Wolfe, Community Development Director Tom Treharne

Based on COVID-19 guidance from Linn County Public Health and the State of Iowa to limit the size of groups gathering, this meeting was held electronically. The agenda and City’s website provided instructions on how others could participate in the meeting.

Minutes

Moved by Martin and seconded by Fiscus to approve the September 9, 2020, regular Park Board minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

Reports

The September Financial Report was reviewed. Moved by Wise and seconded by McIntosh to approve the September Financial Report. Staff noted year-to-date revenues are far behind the prior year’s due to cancelled or low enrollment in recreation programs, the loss of pool revenues, and facility rental cancellations.

The September Invoice Report was received, discussed, and filed. The following payments were highlighted and reviewed: Barnd Electric (Lininger Park pavilion electric and light connections) $3,635, Hanna Plumbing & Heating (Thomas Park generator ventilator system work following power outage) $199, Iowa Prison Industries (parks & trails closed signage) $1,182.35, MSA Professional Services (Lowe Park South End services) $11,630.38, and Uline (barriers and cleaning signs for restrooms due to COVID-19) $505.32.

Public Input

None.

Marion Five-Year Financial Plan

Budget Manager Zach Wolfe shared a presentation outlining the City’s five-year financial plan. The long-term financial plan combines financial planning and strategy. Economic drivers from 1990 to present were used including population and the consumer price index. Wolfe stated the city’s population has doubled over this time frame. Today, 81 percent of general fund revenue comes from property taxes. Public Safety (police and fire services) constitutes 57 percent of the City’s expenditures with Culture and Recreation the next highest. Wolfe explained personnel expenditures (salaries and benefits) is the largest category of expenditures but is a key component to retaining quality employees and continued successful growth. Marion’s five-year financial plan targets structural balance and maintaining a healthy reserve fund.

Marion Uptown Master Plan Update

Community Development Director Tom Treharne presented an update on the Marion Uptown Master Plan which consists of three components: the master plan update, the streetscape plan, and the plaza development. He presented the conceptual plaza plan which includes art features, water features, year-round activities, a performance stage, lighting, timeless design, walkability, peace tree, and a nod to Marion’s history. The water feature will double as an ice rink in the winter.

After the main plaza is developed, small plazas may be considered north and south of the main plaza. This would close 11th Street from 5th to 6th Avenue and expand the current north 11th Street area to 8th Avenue.

The Board was pleased with the plans presented. Staashelm stated the small plazas may be designated as special use areas to be maintained by the Parks Department. Wise noted the park’s budget will need more funding to support the additional maintenance required for all the plaza areas. Martin expressed he is not in favor of closing streets permanently.

Winter Recreation Programming

Protocols for facility rentals were developed to allow for rentals beginning October 1. Select youth recreation programs are also happening and observing established protocols. Currently, senior programming is not being offered by the department or any of the department’s partnerships until the end of the year and possibly longer. To provide senior activities and exercise, the benefits should outweigh the risks as compared to not having senior programming. Wise relayed it is a very hard decision, but if caution is exerted and employees and attendees are kept safe, she is in favor of offering limited options for seniors. Hussel is also in favor of beginning senior activities if safety protocols are in place. She feels programming is important for the physical and mental well-being of this population. Staashelm noted some seniors have been gathering in pavilions for activities, but colder weather will end this soon. Fiscus asked if there is a demand in the community for the City to offer senior programming. Staashelm indicated he receives calls often about bringing back senior activities at Lowe Park. Hummel stated card players have been meeting in homes, but activities such as dancing require a larger location. The board is in support of staff exploring offering options for senior programming with protocols in place to protect staff and participants.

Receive and File

None.

Other Action or Discussion Items

The Facility Rental Waiver was shared with the board. This outlines the COVID-19 safety protocols developed for any facility rental. Wise asked if every attendee signs the protocols or just the renter. Staashelm answered the renter is the only one who signs the waiver. Fiscus noted it would be hard to pinpoint a COVID-19 case back to the rental and the City should be protected with the extra protocols set in place.

Staff Reports

The department’s staff report was presented. Staff are using the City’s GIS Pro system to identify storm damaged items for insurance purposes and to develop a work program around repairs.

Five staff attended the Iowa Parks and Recreation Association’s virtual fall conference in mid-September.

Two horticulture staff planted 165 fall mums in containers and flower beds in Uptown Marion.

The Outdoor Aquatics Center Feasibility Study survey went online this week and has 80 responses already. A public input session will be held October 22 at Lowe Park.

Storybook walks have been set up in partnership with the library along the Lowe Park Art Trail loop and the Gill Park walking trail loop.

RecDesk went live October 1. Recreation programs and pavilion rentals can now be signed up for through the portal.

Board Discussion Time

Martin asked about the status of the non-working lights at the Thomas Park basketball courts. Staashelm relayed the department is working with Alliant to restore power to the pole.

Martin also mentioned the Uptown area seems uncharacteristically dark. Staff indicated there is no power to City Square, thus leaving the Uptown area darker than normal.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday,   
November 11, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. at the Thomas Park Administration and Operations Building.

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