

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY OF OAK CREEK PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION

at 6 PM

Oak Creek City Hall – Tower Conference Room, 8040 S. 6th Street, Oak Creek, WI

1. **Roll Call:** Alderman Guzikowski Janet Fluegel Steve Bautch
Anne Beyer Michael Read Leah Schreiber-Johnson
Mike Theys

In Attendance: Ted Johnson, Director of Public Works
Peter Wagner, Zoning Administrator/Planner
Rebecca Lane, City Forester
Arden Degner, 8540 S. Pennsylvania Ave., Oak Creek, WI

Excused: N/A

The meeting was called to order at 5:58 pm by Chairperson Janet Fluegel.

2. **Approval of Minutes – November 9, 2017**

Motion to approve minutes by Alderman Guzikowski; second by Steve Bautch. Roll call, Fluegel, Bautch, Beyer, Guzikowski, Read and Theys aye; abstention by Leah Schreiber-Johnson. Motion carried.

3. **New Business**

a. **Welcome New Commission Leah Schreiber-Johnson**

Pete Wagner introduced Leah Schreiber-Johnson as a new member of the Commission and gave a brief overview of the function and duties of the Commission.

b. **Amending Chapter 12: Parks**

The City no longer has a Parks, Recreation & Forestry Director, Chapter 12: Parks of the Municipal Ordinance needs to be updated. Suggested updates are:

Change from:	Recommended Change to:
Director of Parks & Recreation	Director of Public Works
Parks & Recreation Commission	Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission
Department of Parks & Recreation	Department of Public Works

Alderman Guzikowski moves that the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission recommend that the Common Council approve the proposed amendments to Chapter 12 as presented. Second by Michael Theys. All aye; motion carried.

c. **Parks Report**

i. **Lake Vista Park**

Nearly the entire park is graded and they are finishing the bluff shelters, and working inside the pavilion (exteriors are completed), playground installed, and overlook installed. The last phase

needing completion is the landscaping (seeding, plants, shrubs, etc.). There is \$300,000 budget for the landscaping/seeding and park furnishings such as tables, chairs, trash bins, etc. Staff has concerns about opening the park too soon before the vegetation has time to be established. Although the park is not officially open, it is currently being used.

The pavilion is 970 sq. ft. with a capacity of 45 people. It was researched and determined that five round tables (seating 9 people each) could be put in the building. The building does have two garage doors and you could bring in additional chairs and put up tents. As for a winter venue, you could seat about 45 people comfortably. The furnishings are part of the \$300,000 budget. Staff is currently working on how to structure the rental fees and is looking at the county facilities, comparing by size. The county charges \$12-\$24/sq. ft. for rental for an hourly basis (\$63-\$73/hour). Tentative start date is very preliminary and we are thinking towards the end of summer which would help to establish vegetation.

Ted Johnson, Director of Public Works, stated that the seed is planted, but it may need to be reseeded several times due to birds, etc. and the area may need some treatments for weeds to get it looking good. There are other areas that are native plants and not turf grass. Weather is also a huge factor to determine how rapidly the grass will grow and fill in, or burn out if there is not enough moisture. When the draw to a park is hundreds of people, the lawn needs to be able to take that kind of beating. It is expected that the playground and overlook areas are going to be huge attractions. This is a capped park with about two feet of clay with topsoil. If people start penetrating that clay cap, there could be issues with EPA, DNR, etc. That is why this area is a park and cannot be used for residential purposes and it became a 50 acre park; which is our second community park in the City.

Kristin Kowaleski, Destination Marketing Specialist, is planning on having a beer garden at this location from August 23-26, 2018. We were thinking it could be a good way to have a big bang opening. That is not written in stone and we know that the building structures will be ready by the end of June. Staff is weighing the pros and cons of doing a soft opening where we start rolling out the rental fees for the bluffs and pavilions starting July 1 or should we wait until after the beer garden.

The City is working with WisPark on various economic development efforts to develop the surrounding areas around the park.

ii. City Beer Garden

The beer garden in 2017 was a great success and went through triple the beer anticipated. Thursday and Friday nights customer lines were outside the tents. This year there will be modifications as to how the tent will be organized in 2018. Two beer garden events are scheduled this year. One will be at Abendschein Park from May 31st through June 3. The City is working with a new partner, Mike Dobel, the owner of the Explorium Brew Pub (at Southridge). By partnering with a business who has experience with beer sales and distributors, we hope to improve efficiency and experience during the events. He was able to provide the City with a 12 tap beer trailer for the May event. Staff is also working on rearranging how the tents were set up with having the tickets purchased (point of sale) prior to consumption. A food component is also going to be added (Mike Dobel has a restaurant) so there will be food items such as a large Bavarian pretzel and a couple of other prepackaged items

available for purchase. The second beer garden will be at Lake Vista Park, August 23-26. The idea is to combine this event with a pig roast and grand opening. The logistics still need to be worked out. There is a possibility that in the future, there could be permanent locations for beer gardens in Oak Creek.

iii. MMSD Plan to Acquire 1436 E. Forest Hill Avenue

Pete Wagner gave an overview to the Commission of the efforts staff made through the State Stewardship grant in 2017 and explained that the property at 1436 E. Forest Hill Avenue was identified as a future park expansion site in the Master Plan for Abendschein Park. The City Engineer pointed out that by purchasing this property it is a way to improve storm water management. Earlier this year, staff spoke with Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) about purchasing the property for flood water mitigation. MMSD was interested in acquiring the parcel but they did not want to own it and asked if the City would take it. The City agreed to accept the parcel if purchased by MMSD. As of now, the proposal to acquire the parcel has gone through the MMSD board. MMSD will pursue purchasing the parcel and then giving the land to the City with the rule that it cannot be developed at all. The bad thing is if the city gets the property and it is an extension of Abendschein Park, nothing can be done with the property including putting in a path. The most the city could install would be a mulch path. The rest of the paths in Abendschein are paved paths and we feel it would not be utilized and there would be maintenance to continue to replenish the mulch. The remainder of the park is ADA compliant and this area does flood and could wash out the mulch in that area.

The mitigation grant people stated they wanted everything to stay all natural. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) contacted the mitigation grant people and requested that we be able to carve out a portion of this parcel so it fall under the stewardship grant and the City could build a paved trail. It turns out that in 2017, Abendschein Park was the next park to be funded if there was enough money to go around. At that time the City applied for a \$250,000 grant and there was not enough money. It turns out that in the 2017 cycle, there was a \$750,000 project awarded in Superior, WI. The project in Superior came in under budget by about \$600,000. This resulted in the grant program having additional money to disperse on other projects. As discussed earlier, a Stewardship Grant has a rule that any land acquired as a result of the grant must be open to hunting and trapping. Fortunately there is waiver to this requirement if the parcel is less than 5 acres. Our engineer mapped out the parcel which divided the parcel between Stewardship grant and Flood Mitigation grant. The flood mitigation grant comes from MMSD, who will purchase the entire 12 acre parcel. MMSD will tear down and clean up all of the property at no charge to the City. The remnant piece comes to 4.75 acres so hunting and trapping does not have to be permitted. There is potential for an area where we could put up an open air gazebo and create a picnic area, parking, and connect to the trail system at Abendschein Park.

The estimate is that it will cost the City only about \$45,000. Last year, this would have cost the City about \$250,000. A year ago we didn't know that MMSD would be a partner. With the addition of these 12 acres, it will expand Abendschein Park to 87 acres and provide a connection from Drexel Avenue and Forest Hill Avenue.

iv. Milwaukee County Oak Leaf Trail Extension Project

Milwaukee County is going to expand the Oak Leaf Trail along the ATC wire pathway located along railroad tracks east of Abendschein Park starting at Drexel Avenue. This extension will extend down to Bender Park. Milwaukee County applied for a grant through the Department of Transportation (DOT) to expand the Oak Leaf Trail. Currently the trail ends at Drexel and winds north through the Oak Creek Parkway through Cudahy, South Milwaukee, and to Grant Park. They are proposing following the ATC wire (gray towers) from Drexel along the eastern edge of Abendschein Park and then go along the ATC wires crossing Puetz to Ryan Road and 5th Avenue where it goes into the park. The City agreed to pay \$320,000 as part of this project, which was a great price for the City. The County will be responsible for all maintenance of the trail. The County has completed 30%-construction plans and realized there is a 16" gas main which was installed in the 1950's and it needs replacement in the next 10 years. The County stated that by the time they finish design and construction, bid out the project and get it installed, it will be 2-3 years (2021-2022). It is feared that shortly after that, WE Energies will be replacing the gas pipeline and will tear out the path. The County is unsure whether or not they want to do the project. The County is discussing whether or not the DOT would permit a gravel trail until after WE Energies replace the pipe. WE Energies does not have a plan for when they will be replacing the pipeline. Pete Wagner sat down with a representatives from DOT, WE Energies and Milwaukee County to discuss this project. The next step is to see if the DOT will permit a gravel trail. To make the proposal more acceptable, the County is proposing to expand the project so that the trail will connect to Oakwood Road. If you are familiar with WE Energies, they have an off road bike path and this would make a link all the way through with the gravel pathway; paving it down the road. We are hoping the DOT will permit us to go through with the gravel trail on the WE Energies easement.

Resident, Arden Degner, 8540 S. Pennsylvania Avenue, asked if the pass through under Highway 100 is still going to be used. Mr. Wagner stated that it will still exist and the new path would be farther east and be an expansion of the Oak Leaf Trail. This would provide more opportunities for bikes and pedestrians.

v. Review of RFP – Master Plan for Abendschein Park

The last time the Master Plan for Abendschein Park was updated was in 2008. Since then, we have done three phases (Phases 1, 2 & 3) which included expansion of the parking lot, concession building, and extension of trail network, playground and shelter. There were eight development phases for the park. We have gone through three; modifying and blending some of them together. It is time to reevaluate and look at how the park is being used especially since we have a second community park at the sound end of town. The previous City Administrator, Jerry Peterson, felt that 10 years was a long time to go without updating the plan and provided funding in the city budget to update the Master Plan. We need to determine if it makes sense to keep all the amenities as planned for this park in place. Mr. Wagner put the Request for Proposal (RFP) together and it is set to be released to the public on April 4, 2018, with a deadline of May 4, 2018. Hopefully by the beginning of June we will have a consultant. This is typically a two to four month process. The map included in the plan would be updated as well with items installed since 2008. This update will likely determine whether or not the disc golf course would be a permanent fixture in at Abendschein Park.

It is hoped that by the May 2018 Commission meeting, Mr. Wagner will be able to update the commission on the progress of the RFP. Mr. Wagner stated that he believes this Commission will be the steering committee and that the consultant will meet with this group. Mr. Wagner felt that

the objectives and goals are not going to change much, but the amenities may change. There might be a relocation of the potential baseball diamond. The land to the west of Abendschein Park, the Uttke property, is still up for sale and may be identified as future park expansion. Mr. Wagner looked at the property and felt that it could be a possibility to put the baseball diamond there as a possible acquisition recommendation in the Master Plan. The Park and Open Space Plan was last adopted in 2013. By DNR rule, if you want to qualify for stewardship dollars, you can't have a Park and Open Space Plan more than five years old on file with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Not only will the City be doing a master plan update for Abendschein Park but will be updating the Park and Open Space Plan as well as updates to the comprehensive plan.

The consultants will give the city a timeline, talk about public engagement, look at current recreation trends in the area as well as in Oak Creek (beer garden concept, baseball diamond, pool issue, disc golf, etc.) There will be a discussions, debates, etc. and the consultant will come up with alternatives. It will be brought to the commission for consideration; staff will provide input as to what they think is a good direction for the City which will include costs for maintaining facilities, do we want active and/or passive recreation but ultimately what is in the best interest of the City as a whole and what in the plan should stay there. We have to remember during the process of updating the Abendschein Master Park Plan that there is now another community park on the sound end of town.

Ted Johnson, Director of Department of Public Works, stated that part of the process is having the consultants tell us what they would propose to do to accomplish some of the things that Mr. Wagner mentioned. For example, someone might put into their proposal that they want to have five community engagement meetings and another might say they feel three is adequate. This is just the consultants submitting ideas on how they are going to go about trying to help establish what the City wants to accomplish in the parks.

Mr. Wagner stated that before the proposal would be adopted, the commission would make a recommendations. After the plan is created and adopted, staff will likely formulate a Phase 4 development plan and how to fund it. There are Park Impact Fee to help fund a Phase 4. How much depends on other park projects in the city. such as public restrooms (by Gigi's Cupcakes/Pizza Man) for events at Drexel Town Square (DTS).

Mr. Bautch brought up the baseball diamond development in the wetland area of Abendschein Park. For economic development purposes, it appears the DNR is looking to relax the rules for wetlands, but when it comes to open space or institutional use, not so much. Mr. Wagner stated that he is not sure if that would be applicable to Abendschein Park. Mr. Bautch asked if the DNR was approached on this topic. Mr. Wagner had been consulting with the City Environmental Engineer. Mr. Bautch has done a considerable amount of research looking for site for a baseball diamond and has pushed hard to try to get the school and city to come together with an agreement to cost share. The city and school district haven't come to such an agreement at this time. Hopefully, there will be a few alternatives that come out of this process.

d. Recreation Report

The recreation report was included in the Commission packet. There were no questions or comments.

e. Forestry Report

Rebecca Lane, City Forester, passed out to the commission the Urban Forestry Vision Statement and asked if anyone had any suggestions or revisions which are due March 30. When asked if she had any suggestions, she stated that she had looked at many different cities statements and they are shorter and more update, but felt that the current one still holds water which she wrote 18 years ago when she stated with the City of Oak Creek. She stated that forestry received a grant to redo the Urban Forestry Management Plan for the City of Oak Creek; which is usually an internal processes plan. This time she added some things to the plan based on where urban forestry is going nationwide. Rebecca Lane presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Commission.

Rebecca Lane stated that she has always wanted a resident forestry committee. She feels that resident input is very input and interesting and it engages them in the process. Rebecca is thinking about adding that as a goal for Forestry.

The City has a wood bin where a lot of the same people come and take wood. With a cord of wood costing about \$300 maybe that it is something that the City should think about and possibly discuss. If the City is giving wood away to people who may be selling it, shouldn't the City be selling it? If it is a street tree, the resident always has the option of keeping it. After the presentation, Ms. Lane opened the floor for comments and/or questions and stated that the commissioners may contact her at any time.

Rebecca stated that they have problems getting people to come to planting and pruning demonstrations. The Commission stated to get the elementary children involved which automatically gets the parent(s) involved.

Alderman Guzikowski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Second by Anne Beyer. Roll call, all aye; motion carried.

Prepared by

Respectfully Submitted by

Peter Wagner, AICP
Zoning Administrator/Planner

Anne Beyer
Secretary

PW/dal