

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
CITY OF OAK CREEK PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY COMMISSION
MARCH 14, 2019
6:00 P.M.**

1. Call Meeting to Order/Roll Call

Leah Schreiber-Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. The following members were present at roll call: Leah Schreiber-Johnson, Steve Bautch, Mike Theys, Heather Ryan, Anne Beyer and Adam Thiel. Alderman Chris Guzikowski arrived at 7:22 p.m. Also present: Ted Johnson, Director of Public Works; Peter Wagner, Zoning Administrator/Planner; Mary Jane Trate, Recreation Department Manager; and Rebecca Lane, City Forester.

2. Approval of Minutes – January 10, 2019

Commissioner Theys motioned to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2019 meeting. Commissioner Beyer seconded. On roll call: All voted aye. Motion carried.

3. New Business

a. Park Rental Policy

Recreation Department Manager Trate provided an overview of the request for staff to develop a fee schedule for events conducted by large non-community based groups. (See staff report for details).

Recreation Department Manager Trate suggested that Ted Johnson speak with Jeff Wendt, Parks Supervisor, as to what types of clean-up have been required after these large events. Discussion ensued on how to make the fees/security deposit cost prohibitive enough to achieve compliance with cleanup requirements of the facility after the renter leaves the facility.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson questioned if the commission should set a rule that allows the parks to be completely rented out only so many days in the park-going season. She continued to explain that it might be helpful to create an Oak Creek summer park schedule so citizens would know what is going on and when. Commissioner Beyer agreed that a park schedule would be a great idea, but a very big undertaking and she was unsure of who would create and maintain it.

Commissioner Beyer suggested limiting the park locations that Oak Creek would offer up for these types of uses because they would be easier to clean and it might be better if the whole park is rented that the clean-up be done by staff to ensure it is brought back to its original condition before rental.

Director of Public Works Johnson suggested that it might be better not to put restrictions on the parks because it is bringing people into our community. Each event should be handled on an individual basis.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson suggested dividing the parks into zones so people could rent out the part of the park they require while leaving the rest of the park available to others.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner stated that the difficulty with a run/walk event is that the group will be going through all of the zones. Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson suggested that maybe the trails themselves become a zone. It may be that they are offered the whole park or just a zone(s), and pay for the usage accordingly.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained that trails should not be rented out and given exclusive rights to someone renting the park.

Recreation Department Manager Trate stated there could be a difference between an event fee and a fee to use the entire park. She also brought up the topic of creating a balance between renting out the whole parks and making sure, the parks are still available to the community for general use.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner suggested that the fee schedule for large events could be similar to special event permit that is reviewed out of the Clerk's office. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner continued by recapping the suggestions that were made earlier.

Director of Public Works Johnson we need to figure out a fee schedule that is going to take care of our parks and allow the City to clean them and repair them when needed. Staff will need to provide the Commission potential fees.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained that staff would go back and do some more research.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner suggested a motion that the Commission and staff develop a fee schedule for large events conducted by non-community based events.

Commissioner Bauth motioned that the Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission approve the request for staff to develop a fee schedule for large events conducted by non-community based groups. Commissioner Ryan seconded. On roll call: all voted aye. Motion carried.

b. Forestry Report

City Forester Lane provided an overview of the ash tree infestation. City Forester Lane explained that non-compliance means after many warnings and letters, the City will hire a contractor to cut down the tree and add the cost to the tax bill. She also referenced that the City is behind on the winter pruning and referred to the Forestry Report for the numbers. (See staff report for details).

This item is informational only and a vote was not required.

c. Parks Report

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner gave an overview of the Parks report. (See staff report for details.)

Park Impact and Bikeway Fees:

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the account balance was down from where it was in January. He continued to explain that the account balance was lower because the last payment for the extension of the Oak Leaf Bike Trail was not reconciled until recently. On December 18, 2018, the funds were moved to the correct accounts.

Park and Open Space Plan Update (Chapter 2)

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner reviewed with the Commission Chapter 2 of the Park & Open Space Plan. Review details are in the parks report. Data regarding wet lands and special habitats have been updated based on the addition of parkland of Emerald Preserve, the addition to Abendschein Park and Falk Park, and the addition of Lake Vista Park. Identified natural areas in the City have not changed since the last update. Critical species habitats exist as they did in the last planning cycle. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained that the definitions and explanations of the different environmental corridors came from the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission (SEWRPC).

The Southwest Corner (Ryan Road and I-94 meet) is part of the development for Amazon. From this development, the County retained 14 acres of parkland area, but the City of Oak Creek was given authority to develop it as a neighborhood park. There is additional County land next to it that will also be included in the park to make a total of 30 acres of parkland in the southwest area of the City. However, a little under half of that land is in a flood plain or wetlands and cannot be developed. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the land is relatively flat, but it is very low. The western portion is going to be maintained as natural space. The park is bordered on the east by railroad tracks.

Map 2 shows the rivers, streams, major tributaries, and wetlands around the City. Map 3 shows the natural areas and critical species areas as identified by SEWRPC. Some of the areas included on the map are Cudahy Woods, Falk Park, and Honadel Woods. Map 4 provides the primary and secondary environmental quarters and isolated natural areas. The goal of this plan is preserve the environmental quarters. The next section of the report explains park types. The largest park type is regional or metropolitan parks and they include, Bender park and Falk Park. It was noted that Oak Creek has no control over those parks. The next park type is greenways and includes, the Root River, the Oak Creek Parkway, owned by the County. The next group of parks is, community parks including, Abendschein Park and Lake Vista. The report provided a brief description of the history and how we got to where we are now. The next group of parks is the, neighborhood and school park sites. The City and schools used to work closely to develop parks and school parks together. The report lists all 21 of those parks in the City and gives a brief description of size and established date. The report covered special use parks. Special use parks are parks with a single use. The special use parks in Oak Creek are Kickers Creek; Metro Pier, owned by MSC, Drexel Town Square, Veteran's Memorial Park, and Runway

Dog Park. The last category of parks is the natural resource parks. Natural resource parks are parks that have no active recreation. These types of parks include Cudahy Preserve, Mardeand Park, and Emerald Preserve. Map 6 shows existing bike systems. We have increased our bikeway system by 12% or .62 miles in the last five years.

Director of Public Works Johnson asked if the trails at Abendschein Park and Lake Vista were included in these figures. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner confirmed he did include those paths in his data and maps. The increase in bikeways is from redevelopment or establishment of a park. This does not include the three miles of bikeway added from Drexel to Lake Vista. Map 5 displays where all the parks are. The table on page 24 shows a breakdown of all the parks by acreage, who owns it, and what outdoor facilities are at each one. Only national standard facilities were included on this table. Map 6 shows the existing bikeway systems. This is a draft that will be hopefully be updated with a new design and photos.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson inquired as to why there is no gymnasium listed for Forest Ridge. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner confirmed he did miss that gymnasium and it will be added. This chapter is still open for revision and comments; if anything needs to be added or changed, it will be added and flagged for the final draft.

No action is required for this item.

Review Park and Open Space Plan Goals and Objectives

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the goal is still relevant to work with other agencies to improve the recreational facilities that are available or accessible for the park system in the City. A status update could include, the City extended 5th Avenue increasing access to Bender Park and Lake Vista. Some of the objectives include coordinate with Milwaukee County, clean up environmentally contaminated land for greenway or development depending on the situation, work with Milwaukee County to insure Falk Park is preserved, and work with Milwaukee County Park and Open Space Plan. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner provided a status update for Falk Park and explained that the park still exists and the City added 50 acres to it. Some of the community goals and objectives are looking at the recreational needs, balancing act of enacting past recreational opportunities, and phase development of Abendschein Park. When this plan was adopted, phase three of development had just begun and was completed. At the time this plan was adopted the City was looking to acquire the land to the west of Abendschein Park. The City could not be acquire the land, but did acquire the greenhouse. Expanding Abendschein Park is still one of the goals.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner continued to explain the next objective. The next objective is to look for, research, and apply for grants to augment funding for additional parkland. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner would like to keep this objective on the list. Number five talks about following the new impact fee legislation. The objective will be updated to remove the word new. The Commission could potentially remove this objective because this is not a goal; it is the law the City has to follow. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the goals and objectives. A recreation facility was brought up at the Comprehensive Planning Workshop. Citizens have an interest in a facility similar to the RecPlex in Kenosha, exercise facility, or a cross training facility.

Commissioner Beyer asked where Oak Creek could build a facility like that.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained there are constraints, however, there is land on 15th and Ryan Road that would be a good spot. However, the location at 15th and Ryan Road does not have sewer and water, which would be a big expense to install. Another facility the City should look into is a baseball facility.

Commissioner Beyer inquired if the land at 15th and Ryan Road was looked at for the baseball fields.

Commissioner Bautch explained they did speak to the landowner, but the land was very expensive at the time.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner continued to the next section of neighborhood parks and school sites. The goal is to comprise a system of parks that meets the needs of residents throughout the City. He presented a map that shows the service area and the different neighborhood names. For the Woodknoll and Oak Creek Manor neighborhoods, the new Amazon Park will help meet that goal. Prairie View and Oak Wood Manor also need a park to service those areas. He explained the map shows a mile radius of the parks. The people in the Southwest corner of the City have to walk the furthest to get to a park. He explained a half-mile walk equates to about a ten-minute walk. The distance of one mile equates to about a 20-minute walk. He suggested the new map would show a half-mile service area.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson inquired if the map was set up as the crow flies.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner confirmed the map is configured as the crow flies. Adding the new service area to the map would allow people the option of walking 10 minutes to a park instead of 20 minutes. The northern part of the City is mostly industrial. Some of the goals are to improve the map and make it so every resident is within ten minutes of a park.

Commissioner Beyer asked if the County Parks were included with this map.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the County Parks are not included on this map. The map is only for neighborhood and school park sites. Part of the planning process when a subdivision comes in is to look for where a park could be incorporated or bike trails that connect the subdivision to a park. The last goal is to keep expanding and connecting the bikeways as much as possible.

Director of Public Works Johnson asked if there was a separate meeting regarding the bikeways.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner confirmed there was a separate meeting. He also showed a map from the Milwaukee County meeting regarding the bike trails. The Oak Leaf Trail comes in from South Milwaukee and ends at Drexel. The new path would continue down and connect to Old Ryan Road. This adds about 3.3 miles of trail.

Director of Public Works Johnson inquired about the piece down by Oakwood.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained he did not know a lot about the proposed trail because it was on previous plans.

Director of Public Works Johnson asked about a resident that is adamant about having a trail down in that area to connect.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner confirmed there is a resident looking for a trail in that area. She wants to be able to connect from Oakwood Lake Estates to Chicago Road. She was hoping to have a bike lane added to Oakwood Road or adding an off road path to get across, then going through Bender Park, and go east on Oakwood Road where it dead-ends. The idea would be to create a path to Bender Park and go on a path up through Lake Vista Park.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner asked for input on the strengths, weaknesses, or opportunities for the park systems. Group discussion ensued regarding the strengths, weaknesses, or opportunities of the park systems in Oak Creek.

- Strength- the number of parks and the variety we have
- adding Lake Vista Park was beautiful addition to the City
- Strength- having a master plan for the future
- Weakness- not having enough ADA equipment in the parks
- Weakness- a lot of our parks have water ways through them
- Opportunity- add ski trails or more winter opportunities for people
- Opportunity- we have room for expansion
- Opportunity- fees generate revenue
- Potential threat – not having a balance between commercial and community due to residential development
- Potential threat- wooded areas that might be encroached upon by residential development
- Concern- parks surrounded by giant buildings
- Weakness- lack of a “RecPlex”
- Strength- unique amenities such as, disk golf and pickle ball courts
- Strength- parks are well kept up

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained when you include, regional, greenway, neighborhood, special use, and nature parks the City has 36 parks. The City has 21 neighborhood parks and 6 special use parks. The “Amazon” Park will be in Oak Creek Manor neighborhood, which is part of the objectives from the last cycle to develop a park in that area. Naming of the neighborhood parks usually follows the name of the neighborhood.

The group discussion regarding the strengths, weaknesses, or opportunities of the park systems continued.

- Opportunity- adding a permanent beer garden facility to Abendschein Park
- Weakness or opportunity- needing more bike trail connections

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson suggested breaking out the topic of, “threats by development,” into its own category due to the volume of ideas included by this idea. She gave an example of new wetlands being accidentally created by development. How does development affect the environment in ways that might cause damage to an area that could have been developed into a park?

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the engineering department would be making sure storm water runoff is managed in a way that it does not negatively affect neighboring parcels. He agreed that we do need to continue to monitor the impact.

The group discussion regarding the strengths, weaknesses, or opportunities of the park systems continued.

- Strength- our strong forestry department
- Strength- people are using our parks, there are no parks that people just don't use.
- Strength- Ted Johnson's team
- Strength- people do use our parks in the winter

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner informed everyone there would be a public informational meeting this summer so people can see some of the information from the Parks Report.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson suggested having a game such as, “name that park.”

The group discussion regarding the strengths, weaknesses, or opportunities of the park systems continued.

- Opportunity- adding a baseball complex
- Threat- green space going away as the City continues to grow

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained that he will go through all the goals and objectives and all the ideas that were provided to him to see if anything should be added or subtracted. The next step going forward is to look at the national park standards and compare our facilities based on population. Furthermore, this plan is used as a guide when staff or the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission make recommendations to the Common Council. Having a master plan in place is a qualifying factor to getting state grant dollars for parks.

Skate Park Replacement Project

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner gave an overview of the skate park proposal. (See staff report and attachment for more information).

Examples of the skate parks with prices were provided to Commission members. Although the replacement of the skate park was identified in the master plan, this project was approved as part of the 2019 city budget. A future development phase of Abendschein Park has yet to be developed.

Commissioner Beyer inquired if the design costs would be coming out of the \$190,000.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner confirmed the design costs would come out of the money from Common Council.

Director of Public Works Johnson explained they originally asked the Common Council for that amount of money based on bids taken out by the state of Wisconsin to purchase new metal pieces for skate ramps. After going to other communities who purchased these new pieces and speaking skaters it was determined that, this option would not be the best use of the City's money. Those ramps are better designed for indoor competitions. The consultant Director of Public Works Johnson is working with was a professional skater. The company is working on a skate park in North Dakota that is similar to the City's budget. They are also working on one in the Minneapolis area that is around \$200,000- \$225,000 range. The designer thinks the slab of concrete currently in place at Abendschein Park is in good enough condition that pieces can be added to it. Director of Public Works Johnson also suggested that we could start with some pieces and add more components as time goes on.

Commissioner Beyer asked if the plan would include lighting. Director of Public Works Johnson explained if lighting is added he would not want to include it with this part of the plan. He suggested to make that an in-house project using City crews. He continued to explain that the parks do not have lighting at this time because parks close at dusk.

Director of Public Works Johnson clarified that the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Commission is responsible for these types of decisions and the group can decide if lights should be added to the plan or not.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained part of the design could include surveillance cameras. He sought a motion to pursue this project and to go further with the current company, Newline Skateparks. Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained he still has to talk with the City Administrator because the costs are about 10% of the budget.

Director of Public Works Johnson expressed his opinion that the fees are not out of line because engineering and architectural fees are typically between 10% and 12%. This also has a community outreach component, similar to the master plan.

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the Council would like to get this done sooner rather than later. He provided a timeline of designing and constructing. He predicted the skate park would be complete by summer of 2020. The \$190,000 would be coming from park

impact fees. The Common Council makes the final say on budget and funding. Stantec suggested there might be some grants available for this type of work.

Director of Public Works Johnson explained that some of the grants they have found so far are directed more towards the inner city.

Alderman Chris Guzikowski makes a motion to move forward with the skate park replacement project with Newline Skateparks. Commissioner Bautch seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Parks and Forestry Equipment and Labor Costs

Zoning Administrator/Planner Wagner explained the Parks and Forestry Equipment and Labor Costs that were part of the Parks Report are the same as the January 10th meeting with no changes.

This item is informational only and a vote is not required.

2019 Fees and Charges

Recreation Department Manager Trate explained they do a comparison to what nearby communities have been charging. Fees have not been increasing lately to help keep us comparable to other communities. Some fees increased this year including softball league fees, which will increase for next year, some park rental fees, including, Miller Park and picnic packs.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson inquired what a picnic pack is.

Recreation Department Manager Trate explained it includes, volleyball set, throw bases, a couple of balls, Frisbees, and a scoop ball set. They are rented on the weekends. She continued to explain the increases. The additional increases include permits of the ball diamonds, tennis courts, and Miller Park Pavilion, for both summer and winter.

Commissioner Schreiber-Johnson asked about winter and summer fees.

Recreation Department Manager Trate explained there are different fee structures for the winter and summer seasons.

Alderman Chris Guzikowski makes a motion to recommend approval of the fee changes for 2019. Commissioner Theys seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

4. Adjournment

Commissioner Ryan motioned to adjourn. Alderman Guzikowski seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Prepared By:


Peter Wagner, AICP
Zoning Administrator/Planner

Respectfully Submitted,


Michael Theys
OCPRF Secretary