



**Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2023, 7:00pm**

Present: Shelly Simpson, Brian Motley, Guy Goldsmith, Tim Hamer, Richard Grugin, Shannon Greene, Amy Chen, Kevin Stibal.

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes Motion to approve November 2nd, 2023 minutes: Shannon; Second: Amy
None opposed to unanimous consent.

3. Reports

a. Parks Report—Guy Goldsmith

- The Parks Department has been busy winterizing landscaping, buildings, and equipment. The first snow removal took place on November 26th.
- Staff completed the annual required continued education to maintain state certified pesticide/herbicide licensing.
- The City Administration building project is on schedule and anticipated to open in the spring.
- Guy continues to attend the Centennial Park Next Stage meetings.
- The Fox Run Pond trail project was put out to bid—10 bids back, contract has been awarded and is lower cost than original expectations. The Fox Run Park playground equipment has been ordered. Contractor scheduled for late August.
- Progress on the Penn Meadows north parking lot. Sod is down, area graded and landscaped. Originally planned to move the existing monument but ended up needing a new monument sign as the old one was cracked and wouldn't survive the move. Used the funds designated to move it for the purchase of the new one.
- Old Casey's building has been torn down. It was originally built on top of a sanitary sewer. The city purchased the lot and can now conduct any needed repairs/updates. Nothing was decided at this time, but the City may resell the property in the future for commercial use.
- Commission members asked about the status of the run-down car wash adjacent to the old Casey's site. Guy shared that the city doesn't own car wash but rather it is privately owned.
- 2024/2025 budget planning is in progress. Guy is working to prioritize needs and projects to develop the CIP. Guy will present his operating budget to the city administration on December 19th.
- Amy asked about the recent announcement of a large grant received by the city. Guy and Richard confirmed that a \$900,000 Enhance Iowa grant was awarded but requires \$100,000 match within 90 days. Shelly and Guy shared that the City Communications Department is doing a great job fundraising and are taking the lead on securing the matching funds.

b. Recreation/Pool Report—Shelly Simpson

- The Recreation Center has been busy with holiday events. Matt Meseck, Recreation Center staff, is the lead on planning and coordinating holiday events such the recent vendor fair (well attended), Elf on a Shelf and Santa's Workshop. Community members are encouraged to stop by the Recreation Center or visit the city website for more information on these events and activities.
- The Winter/Spring activity guide is completed, which covers January through April programming. Registration began December 4th and was very busy.
- Interviews for the open full-time custodial maintenance position were conducted in late November. There were 30 applicants and 8 were selected for interview. The decision will be made by the end of next week.

- Shelly is working on the Recreation Department 2024/25 budget and will be meeting with the city administration soon.
- Kevin commented on the success of the Halloween event at Liberty Pond—well done. Shelly shared that due to popularity, the event may move to two nights next year.

4. Questions, Concerns, Updates—none

5. Community Input / Ideas to Share

- Eva Anderson, Quail Creek Neighborhood Ambassador addressed the commission to discuss the Pebble Court/Fairview Lane traffic circle. The Neighborhood Association is interested in having the circle upgraded and beautified. It has looked the same for many years and needs beautification and repair. Eva expressed appreciation for prior communication with Guy on this issue and stated that the neighborhood is hoping that this project can be included in the upcoming budget.
- Michelle Edwards, Quail Creek Neighborhood resident, advocated for upgrades to the traffic circle.
- Shannon shared that she resides near the traffic circle and agrees that repairs and beautification would have a major impact. This project will become more important as traffic increases with the opening of the new hospital.
- Kevin asked if removing the traffic circle was an option. Guy shared that it would be more expensive to remove than upgrade, and that it also serves a valuable function in slowing traffic.
- Eva asked about the City's budgeting process to best know how neighbors could advocate for the inclusion of the traffic circle project. She shared that neighbors are willing to help in any way including contributing to the project and gathering support through petition. She asked if it is realistic to get it through next year's budget. Guy responded that it has been mentioned to the City Manager. It is not truly a Parks project, however, but more of a streets project, however Guy is willing to present it and feels the Parks Department would be willing to assist given it is landscaping. He would just need approved resources for new plants, ground cover and signs. One bid was secured about a year ago from a local landscaper and came in between \$5000-\$6000.
- North Liberty resident John Weis addressed the commission. John and his wife, Beth, are longtime residents who reside on St. Andrews Drive. John shared that they are part of a group of approximately 20 residents who are members of "Friends of Freedom Park". This group has been very active in advocating and caring for the park, including Earth Day Clean Up. John thanked Guy and his department for their response and assistance to requests, including the removal of wild parsnip. John inquired about the future for the park and if any improvements or construction were happening. Guy responded that plans are included in the FY26 CIP and would include trail connections. John asked how his group could help provide input to the plan. Guy shared that they work with Shive Hattery for planning and can ask for public input when that time comes—discussions likely starting next year. Brian asked John what they would like to see added. John mentioned assets to improve fishing such as piers and handicap accessibility. Neighbors would be willing to contribute to flowers and trees.
- Shannon asked about seating at the park. Guy responded there is none currently, but it would be added with the trail. Most benches in town have been purchased by families or individuals for memorials. Community members can contribute in this way. The ballpark cost per is \$2000 (\$1000 bench plus concrete pad). Planting a tree is a less desirable option as it is tough to maintain a plaque next to a tree.
- Eva asked if there is information on the website about sponsoring a bench. Guy said it can be added and shared that any group could sponsor a bench, it wouldn't have to be a memorial.
- Richard expressed gratitude to Guy and the Parks Department for the time and care they take with projects.
- Kevin asked if community groups could raise funds now for a bench, ahead of the work with Shive Hattery. Guy said yes, with the caveat that a bench may have to be moved in the future. Currently there is a 10-week wait on bench orders.
- Guy circled back to the traffic circle topic and let the commission and community members know that final budget decisions won't be made until April. Guy expressed his thanks to the community members for helping out with the clean-up of Freedom Park as it is a great help to the city.

6.Upcoming Events

- a. WS Programs (Jan-April) registration under way. Registration started last week. Look for that data in next month's report.
- b. Supreme Leagues held on Saturdays begin in January, 2024. Tiffin, NL, Coralville league—largest number of kids ever. 140 1st and 2nd grade boys participating.

7. New Business

- a. Kevin Stibal resignation-Kevin announced his resignation from the commission, due to family obligations. The Commission expressed they're thanks to Kevin for his service.
- b. Board Appointments – Mayor will appoint two new board members on Dec. 12th meeting. Start with January 2024 meeting.

8. Old Business

Fox Run Playgroup equipment ordered and scheduled for installation late August. Will take 2 weeks for equipment and surfacing. No wood chips, all new playgrounds will have new surfacing. Life expectancy 20+ years, warrantied, holding up well in Iowa weather.

9. Next Meeting

- a. Thursday, January 4, 2024, at 7:00pm.

10. Adjourn Motion: Amy; Second: Kevin None opposed.