



Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2024, 7:00pm

Present: Shelly Simpson, Brian Motley, Guy Goldsmith, Tim Hamer, Richard Grugin, Shannon Greene, Amy Chen, Nicholas Arnold, Donglin Chai, Gwen Johnson.

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve January 4, 2024, minutes: Johnson; Second: Greene. Approved via unanimous consent.

3. Reports

Parks Report—Guy Goldsmith

- Parks team completed lots of building maintenance and snow removal which has been rough on equipment.
- Preparing equipment for spring season.
- The 30" of snow received damaged the ice rink at Penn Meadows Park and it is unusable this season and staff will examine structure to ensure no major components failed.
- Grugin pointed out that the Next Stage project at Centennial Park will include a more permanent ice rink.
- Goldsmith attended meetings this month for the City Administration Building, Centennial Park, and Fox Run Trail project.
- Conducting employee performance reviews
- Conducting FY 25 budget review
- Working with area colleges on securing paid summer interns/employees. Primarily landscaping on City property. Will hire approximately 12. Compete with other area parks departments for staff and remain competitive with pay to attract them.
- The team assisted with the Beat the Bitter event, clearing snow, and assisting with bonfire.
- New trash receptacles installed in front of Heyn's Ice Cream on Dubuque Street. City purchased receptacles and Heyn's staff will be responsible for clearing them.
- Grugin inquired about ice fishing on City ponds. Goldsmith stated it is allowed if fishers understand it's at their own risk and they follow all DNR regulations which are enforced by DNR staff.
- Goldsmith updated Commission on the project that has converted the bike shelter on the north side of the Community Center to a workspace for staff janitorial and maintenance staff. Building has been closed in to create an indoor space for this work. Will allow staff to work on projects during colder months that otherwise would have to wait until spring weather. Project was completed with assistance from high school students in the construction program within ICCSD.
- Chai inquired about policy and procedures regarding pet waste in parks and how that's cleaned. It is the responsibility of pet owners to clean up after their pets, but staff will clean up waste when it is noticed. Johnson pointed out that failure of community members to clean up after pets makes the parks and community look bad and encouraged everyone to ensure they are being responsible.
- The access code for the dog park gate is changing and members should receive notification soon. Reminder the community that to use the dog park you must have membership.
- Arnold thanked Guy and the entire team for all their work keeping City parks and trails clear after the snowstorms.

Recreation/Pool Report—Shelly Simpson

- Simpson stated it continues to be a busy time of year at the recreation facility.

- Recent weather forced staff to keep up with clearing entrances and tracked snow.
- Weather did force the closure of the center for two days, which isn't a common occurrence.
- New full-time custodian started this month. Thanked staff for assisting during time center was short-staffed.
- Simpson conducted evaluations and budget review this month.
- Winter/Spring classes on programs began in January.
- Winter leagues also are underway.
- Facility rentals remain strong for private groups.
- Johnson pointed out that for a community of 22,000 people, it's impressive that nearly 14,000 are in the center database as users or past users of center facilities and programming.
- Johnson asked whether there is center staff focused on reaching seniors, 55+ about programming at the center. Simpson stated only several people work to reach that audience.
- Chen noted the large uptick in January center users associated with New Years' resolutions. Simpson noted by mid-February this spike tends to go down.
- Chai suggested a center open house after the new year to recruit new members and to encourage members to stick with their resolutions. Arnold noted they could create some sort of resolution challenge to provide incentive for members to keep coming back such as a "150 visit club" over the course of a year.
- Chai suggested consideration of how to ensure members continue their membership before it expires each month.
- Chai and Chen complimented the center for how the private room rental is structured and willingness of staff to assist in their use.
- Commission discussed the amount of equipment on the second level. Though crowded, the machines are in demand and used frequently by members. Simpson noted that budget may not allow for as much replacement of equipment in FY25 so broken equipment may not be replaced.
- Motley discussed the large numbers of youth basketball teams using the facility this winter from local communities.

4. Questions, Concerns, Updates

- Chai offered suggesting from community members she had received. They generally speak highly of the center. They asked about potentially having higher level swimmers with more access to lanes in the pool. Simpson noted that the largest number of children in lessons are the lower levels which necessitates holding space for them. Chai also inquired about programmable time for young kids during the winter to use the center. Simpson pointed to open gym time in the mornings and the campfire playground as options but also that there are many competing requests for the space to be accommodated.
- Arnold inquired about summer programming eliminating the Knight Rider program for tweens this summer. Simpson stated that Knight Rider attendance was incredibly low last summer, and the kids were not engaged with the program – coming only for the field trip day and not participating in the community service aspect. Arnold asked whether there were other options under consideration for older kids that could replace Knight Riders – perhaps enhancement of the junior counselor program for Recsters. Matt Fielder is working on potentially increasing that program. Simpson stated she would get more information on that status.

5. Community Input / Ideas to Share - none

6. Upcoming Events

- 3-on-3 basketball tournament is coming soon
- Sip and Stroll at Liberty Centre

7. New Business

8. Old Business

9. Next Meeting

- a. Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 7:00pm.

10. Adjourn Motion: Arnold; Second: Johnson None opposed.