



Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2024, 7:00pm

Present: Shelly Simpson, Tim Hamer, Brian Motley, Richard Grugin, Nicholas Arnold, Gwen Johnson, Donglin Chai, Shannon Greene, Kevin Smith

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve June 6, 2024 minutes: Johnson; Second: Greene. Approved via unanimous consent.

3. New Board Member Welcome: Commission welcomed Kevin Smith to the Board.

4. Commission Positions: Commission unanimously selected Grugin to continue to serve as Chair, Greene to continue to serve as Vice Chair, and Arnold to continue to serve as Secretary.

3. Reports

Parks Report – Tim Hamer

- Parks staff continued with parks maintenance and completed work on community gardens shed, and work at outdoor pool.
- Staff completed clean up at Owen Skelley Field after City fireworks display.
- Regular maintenance of City recreation fields
- Splash pad at Penn Meadows has been closed for maintenance but will re-open by September 1 and remain open as long as weather allows.
- Johnson sought clarity regarding the new playground structures being placed in Fox Run and Hamer advised where those were being placed.
- Staff assisted in Blues & BBQ preparation, set up, tear down and parking of vehicles. Greene mentioned that the parking was very well done and organized.
- Touch up work was completed at City Hall with addition of new sod and grading of the area.
- The old playground at Penn Meadows was removed as it had reached the end of its life expectancy after 27 years. The swing set structure will be repurposed and used elsewhere.
- Fox Run Park project is well underway and the playground will be installed beginning August 20.
- Grugin expressed thanks to Liberty High students for assistance on completing the shed project.
- Staff is working on some dead tree clean up around town. There will be another 10-12 trees planted at the end of September in Penn Meadows Park.
- Greene asked about the work on the roundabout on Fairview Lane. Hamer stated that work is still planned for this fall.
- Arnold asked what plans were in the works for the old playground at Penn Meadows. Hamer stated the plan, pending approval is to create a full court concrete basketball court. There are no plans currently for lighting that space or for sport court finishing.
- Chai inquired about a slide that had been cracked at Centennial Park. Hamer stated staff replaced that piece upon notification. Grugin reminded the public to let City staff know of similar issues they might see so they can be addressed.
- Arnold asked if field condition post-summer was in better shape due to the changes in pricing and fees this year. Hamer and Motley stated they were in good shape but not noticeably better shape.

- Hamer advised the out building near the Community Center has been completed and is now a workshop area for Center staff to complete projects.
- Chai asked about a large dumpster that was left in Centennial Park after Blues & BBQ. Hamer stated LRS mistakenly left that longer than it should have been. It was removed.

Recreation/Pool Report—Shelly Simpson

- Simpson stated pool operations were resolved after pump failure at the indoor pool and subsequent underwater light issue, followed by some heater issues.
- Programming continued strongly for aqua classes/programs throughout the summer. Pool issues did contribute to juggling of programs and classes from indoor to outdoor pools.
- Greene asked about revenue from aqua classes being negative. Simpson stated pool issues caused some programs to be cancelled resulting in a negative number. Arnold asked whether this was a significant financial issue and Simpson advised staff was able to move most programs around to avoid cancelations.
- Youth lessons continued throughout the summer and were successful. Motley advised limited gym space in the fall restricts how much programming can be offered.
- Arnold asked what kind of balance is sought between leagues/programming and open gym space for the community. Motley stated staff attempts to keep one gym open to the public whenever possible.
- Simpson said youth summer day programs continued strong through the summer.
- The “Messy Play Date” for young children has been popular. It’s a sensory play activity for children using mud, water, paint, etc.
- Tippie Toes dance lessons had 45 participants
- Senior Connection lunches served 145 people over the month, about 36 per lunch.
- Euchre Tournament had 9 teams this summer and more are planned.
- Simpson pointed to strong pool and gym memberships for the summer.
- Friday, August 16 in North Liberty Community Night at the Cedar Rapids Kernels. Tickets will be available at the Community Center for the public.
- Motley stated staff is working on the duct socks in the indoor pool to keep them in place due to wear over time as well as the acoustic panels.
- Gym floors will be refinished next week, closing the gyms for two days.
- Simpson reminded the community that pool hours will be limited from August 23 – September 1 with the pool closing on September 2.
- Fall Activity Guide was issued in July and registration opened this week for programs and registration has started strong. Registration opens at 6:00 a.m. on the registration open date. That time is tied to the Center’s hours of operation.

5. Questions, Concerns, Updates

- Greene and Johnson pointed out the Community Center is aging and asked whether there is a plan for a large scale renovation of the space. Simpson stated that it’s under consideration but City priorities are the new fire station and Centennial Park. Arnold pointed out space is a premium at the current site so expansion could be difficult.
- Parking lot construction will be conducted soon and completed in stages to allow for continued access to the building.
- Grugin mentioned that there are 14,000+ people in the database for the Community Center which is over half the population.
- Johnson asked whether there was any push back on daily rate increases for the Pool. Staff stated there was not. Arnold asked whether it resulted in an increase in memberships. Simpson said there was an uptick in June for monthly memberships but not a significant increase in annual memberships.
- Johnson asked whether community ambassadors were aware of the changes and updates with the Community Center. Simpson stated she has met with them in the past and they are always welcome to connect with her with questions or concerns.

- Chai asked for clarification on how community members can use space at the Community Center for programming. Simpson stated contract programming forms can be submitted and she will try to find space for the program and include that in Center materials. The contractor receives 70% of the revenue while the City keeps 30%. Simpson said in order to be included in the Winter/Spring activity guide contractors should have information to her by early October.
- Both Grugin and Johnson said the dog park looks amazing and encouraged community members to keep the park looking nice for all.
- Johnson reminded the community to be careful on the roads around our City parks to avoid accidents and to be aware of children crossing in those crosswalks.

Community Input / Ideas to Share

- None
5. Upcoming Events
 - North Liberty Community Night at the Kernel, August 16
 6. New Business
 7. Old Business
 8. Next Meeting
 - a. Thursday, September 5 at 7:00 p.m.
 9. Adjourn Motion: Johnson; Second: Arnold. None opposed.