

DECORAH PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

City Hall Council Chambers

Thursday, February 20, 2025 – 5:00 PM

1. **Welcome, Roll Call and Introductions** – *Gaard, Bakken, Fuhrmann, Nichols, Kerndt* were in attendance. *Marc Holtey (Parks and Recreation Director), Travis Goedken (City Manager) and Christopher Miculinich (City Council Member)* were in attendance. Gaard called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.
2. **Visitors/Public Comment** – Two visitors attended. No public comment.
3. **Consider Approval of Minutes for January 16, 2025 Regular Meeting and February 13, 2025 Special Meeting** – *Kerndt* made a motion to approve, *Nichols* 2nd, Ayes: 5 Nays: 0; Motion Carries.
4. **Department Reports** - *Holtey* shared the department reports.
 - CAMPGROUND
 - ❖ Let's Camp Reservation Transition – Full migration. *Scott Vande Krol* and Campground staff (along with *Mallory McArtor*) are working out details with Let's Camp and getting things ready for reservations on March 1.
 - ❖ New Rates and Fee Structure. Approved by the Board along with full migration to Let's Camp on Thursday, February 13.
 - ❖ Tree work and invasives removal. Putting together a planting plan for the campground.
 - ❖ Prepping for the Eagle Rock Sculpture installation.
Kerndt brought up the \$8 per adult fee and whether there was additional discussion at the February 13 Special Meeting. *Holtey* shared that this was replacing the additional tent fee. Added that charged additional people (beyond the site maximum) is a common practice. *Kerndt* stated he understood replacing the additional tent fee for tent sites, but his concern was about charging additional adults for trailer and motorhome sites.
 - PARKS
 - ❖ Rink will be maintained through the weekend.
 - ❖ Trail rolling and grooming last weekend at Community Prairie, Carlson Prairie, Ice Cave Road and Trout Run Trail. *Jon Geiger* rolled and groomed the trails.
 - ❖ Winter seeding at Carlson Park, Miller Park Trail, Palisades and Ice Cave Road.
 - ❖ Community Prairie and Butterfly Garden Volunteer Potluck on Tuesday, February 11.
 - ❖ Preparing plants for spring planting throughout the park system.
 - ❖ Bluebird boxes – Five more volunteers to adopt boxes. Waiting on a grant to see if we have funding to expand from 12 to 28 bluebird boxes. *Logan Hahn* has been working on this.
 - ❖ *Corey Meyer* attended the Association for Integrated Roadside Management “Winter Meeting” in Altoona on Wednesday, February 19.
 - ❖ Collaboration with other departments on projects at “The Cut” and other sites.
 - ❖ *Holtey* shared about the Buckthorn Blitz on January 18 with this report from DHPT (Nick Pearch): “We finished clearing Triple Springs area. Crews also finished where the power line company started clearing also. The area was very steep, which made clearing work slower and more difficult, but everyone was in high spirits to get the area done. We had 10 people chain sawing and hauling brush for a total of 37 volunteer hours. A special thanks to Jon, Logan, and Corey for hauling brush from the road. I know it's a time-consuming task.”

Equestrian Use in the Parks – Next Steps for Staff

1. Determine Timeline for Implementation – Phase 1 – Van Peenen Shared Use Trails First, Phase 2 - Dunning's Spring/Ice Cave Shared Use Trails
 2. Determine Infrastructure Needs, Costs and Identify Funding Sources
 3. Determine Parameters of Equestrian Use – Rules and Best Practices, Site Visits
 4. Determine Signage and Placement of Signs
 5. Design Equestrian Trail Maps
 6. Determine On-Going Maintenance Plan and Volunteer Involvement for Sustainable Trails
 7. Phase in Trail Use
- ❖ *Holtey* shared a brief update on shared equestrian trail use. Walked trails with Park Staff on Friday, February 7 to assess the trails from Luge to Old Randy's to Upper Ice Cave. Walked through the Van Peenen trails (late fall) to assess them, as well. Looking at safety, sustainability and access to trails by users, maintenance and emergency services.
 - ❖ Also looked at signage (wayfinding) and points to add or improve signage. Considering a new emergency sign-posting location system. Need to secure funding to rebuild bridges at the bottom of Rocky Road to handle equestrian use.
 - ❖ Planning some work in the prairie areas of Van Peenen.
 - ❖ Looking at some areas for clearance and visibility on the shared use trails in Van Peenen. Some of it will involve more work on the invasives and piles of brush.
- Fuhrmann* shared concerns about using city funds to modify trails for a single user group. *Danielle Dotzenrod* after being addressed by *Fuhrmann*, responded stating the Saddle Club is willing to provide volunteers and help with funding and that has been communicated to *Holtey* which he acknowledged. *Dotzenrod* also asked about including the Saddle Club with a Waiver Agreement (like DHPT). *Gaard* asked *Holtey* if we can do something similar for the Saddle Club. *Holtey* responded we would do the same (Liability and Waiver Release Agreement for Trail Workers).

RECREATION

Coming to Close

- ❖ Winter Birding Series by Winneshiek County Conservation - January 30, February 6, and February 13
- ❖ Bidy Basketball ~ 60 Pee Wee (Ages 3-4) ~ 65 Kinder (Ages 5-6)
- ❖ Fly Fishing Workshop - Saturday, February 1 - 25 participants (estimate)
- ❖ Superhero Sunday - Sunday, February 2 - Extremely low participation compared to prior years
- ❖ Winter and Nature - February 4 -25 - Cancelled due to low registration numbers

Ongoing

- ❖ Spring Brochure released on Friday, February 14 - Soccer, Easter Egg Hunt, March Madness, Live Healthy Track Meet and more
- ❖ Middle School Bowling - February 15 -March 22 – 23 registered
- ❖ Volleyball - Women's League (Wednesday Nights) - A League- 7 Teams; B League- 10 Teams Coed League (Sunday Nights) - 11 Teams
- ❖ Family Open Gym - Sundays 1-4pm
- ❖ Wayside Ice Rink & Warming House - Remains open pending weather

Coming Up

- ❖ Spring Activities starting in March/April
- ❖ March Madness – Bracket Challenge
- ❖ Active in the Outdoors
- ❖ Soccer Leagues
- ❖ Easter Egg Hunt
- ❖ Archery Kickoff on April 5

Other

- ❖ A Nomad Sauna Residency Proposal at Twin Springs Park was shared with the Board. *Nichols* shared it would be something to investigate and a potential offer something unique with some revenue. Added that Twin Springs is a critical area, and other agencies would need to be involved. The Board decided they would like to take additional time to weigh out the proposal and we can re-visit this at a future meeting.

SWIMMING POOL

- ❖ Checking in on equipment throughout the winter. *Holtey* shared that with recent electrical at the pool (phase work) we need to test the pumps to make sure they are running the right way.
- ❖ Recruiting and hiring guards.
- ❖ Season preparation.
- ❖ Work with state certifications with the health department.
- ❖ Continuing to work with state and engineer for diving board installation.

5. **Consider Approval of Decorah Human Powered Trails “Trail Worker” Liability Release and Waiver** – *Holtey* gave a brief overview. *Kerndt* made a motion to approve, *Nichols* 2nd, Ayes: 5 Nays: 0; Motion Carries.

6. **Updates and Discussion on Projects – IRVM Program Application, Archery Range and Bow Hunting in the Parks** – *Holtey* shared updates on the IRVM Program Application. The application was presented and approved through the City Council “Consent Agenda” on Monday, February 17. A few minor edits before it is submitted after the IRVM Committee Meeting on Tuesday February 25. *Holtey* provided an update on the Archery Range and the tentative date/time for a “Grand Opening” on Saturday, April 5 from 12-3 PM. Shared an example of the City of Dubuque Bow Hunting in the Parks program. Talked about the value of the program in the city and that it is a part of the Sustainability Plan. Also shared that the Archery Range could be used to test proficiency for Bow Hunters participating in the Parks Deer Hunting program. Also shared a proposal from a deer expert and hunter looking to find a way to continue to hunt in Carlson with the impending trail project. A key part of that proposal would be shutting down the new Carlson Park trails during the hunting season. *Fuhrmann* responded he would not be in favor of the proposal. The trails will be heavily used, and many people have been a part of the process to advocate for this project and raise funds and support. *Gaard* agreed that it would not be good idea. *Fuhrmann* also added that hunting in city parks is a part of unique initiative and is a privilege. *Kerndt* agreed that it doesn’t make sense to shut them down during a time where people are really enjoying them in the fall. We haven’t done this along other trail corridors. *Kerndt* asked *Goedken* and *Holtey* to consider other areas in the city where this program could be implemented. *Nichols* agreed with not implementing this proposal. Also sees the value of the program, as well as looking at some elements of the City of Dubuque program and others.

7. **Update and Discussion on Capital Improvement Projects**

- Carlson Park Project - *Holtey* provided an update on the process with DOT and updated the current cost of the project. *Goedken* shared additional information that the DOT asked for and that the information has been provided. There was also a request for cross-sections of the entire 5.3 miles of mountain biking trails. It was determined that this was not feasible. *Schubbe Consulting* and the LRE have been helpful in getting things ready for review by the DOT. *Nichols* asked about the next steps and timeline. *Goedken* shared that DOT has up to 30 days to review. *Holtey* also shared that the Carlson Park Trail Development Fund flyer link is being updated through the Community Foundation.
- Ballfield and Pickleball Court Project – *Holtey* provided an update. New cost estimate for the project due to additional earthwork. *Holtey and Goedken* will meet with ISG to discuss ways to

reduce that cost. *Holtey* shared that the WQI Grant Application was submitted on Friday, February 14 by *Danielle* from ISG. The request for the grant was increased from \$227,000 to \$377,000. This is in response to the additional earthwork and the soil testing in the wetland/native plantings area of the project. Due to the soil composition, the basin design will change from detention to infiltration.

8. **Discuss Fundraising and Consider Approval of Naming Rights Contribution Levels for Capital Improvement Project (Ball Fields and Pickleball Courts)** *Holtey* gave an overview of the goals of this agenda item. *Goedken* clarified that the total amount needed is \$1.5 million. *Nichols* shared that the Clinton Parks and Recreation and document was a good, thorough document. *Kerndt* asked about fundraising. *Nichols* talked about tiers being set. Potential contributors might be excited about those opportunities. Doesn't have an issue with naming rights. Shared about the guidelines and what is appropriate. *Kerndt* shared the concern about attaining the goals. Talked about who would be doing that and leading this effort. *Goedken* shared about starting off with fields, big donations and then go forward with other donations. Re-stated what *Nichols* shared at a previous meeting that we need "buy in from the community." Shared about that "buy in" could be expressed through using bricks through the concrete corridor and plaza. People could show their support in this way. *Kerndt* asked about in-kind work and how to assign a dollar amount. *Goedken* shared an example of how that could be done during the bid process as a deduct. *Nichols* brought the discussion back to "naming rights" or contribution "levels". *Gaard* suggested a level for naming rights on ball fields based on the Clinton model of \$80,000. *Gaard* suggested the same level for pickleball courts. *Nichols* shared that we take into account that businesses will get it. However, the public will need more outreach and education on the project. *Gaard* talked about a Luther model paying over time. Large donor kicking it off. *Kerndt* talked about the importance of an initial \$250,000 contribution. *Nichols* talked about the Waverly Complex and the name of the park. *Nichols* talked about the large donors. Sponsorship is harder to determine. A policy document would be important with a lease type of agreement for outfield windscreens and advertising. *Gaard* asked about whether Clinton filled in the request. *Nichols* asked about monetizing different areas. Tangible areas that are available to sponsorship. *Kerndt* is in favor of naming rights, but it must be a contract. *Fuhrmann* talked about DPR Policies and how they factor in this effort. *Kerndt and Goedken* shared about naming something with an expectation and designated time. *Kerndt* talked about tier pricing and not setting things too low. He shared the importance of visibility. Some sort of structure. Clinton would be a good starting point. *Goedken* talked about the dog park and the potential for additional enhancements. *Fuhrmann* talked about looking at it retroactively to maintain the integrity of those who initially contributed to the dog park. *Goedken* clarified that sponsorship would bring amenities to the dog park. *Goedken* provided an example of sponsorship for a 10-year period: \$350,000 for entire complex, \$250,000 per ball field, Dog Park (with upgrades) \$150,000, \$50,000 per pickleball court and \$25,000 per scoreboard. Talked about throwing the first pitch as another avenue for fundraising. *Gaard* shared about Luther and a similar idea. *Kerndt* talked about windscreens. *Gaard* shared about bricks and likes the idea. *Kerndt* thought about \$20,000 and under finishing off the fundraising. *Holtey* shared that dugouts and batting cages could be eligible. *Goedken* talked about putting things out to bid and having a reserve bid. Talked about the ag market. *Kerndt* talked about getting out and talking to people. Shared his experiences at the Fairgrounds. Talking to people increased from 1 to 6 sponsorships the following year. Created a position for the others in the bid process to contribute, as well. *Bakken* talked about including original stakeholders being involved. Personal connection and appeal. Vested interest in seeing this happen. *Goedken* talked about fundraising outreach with youth teams. *Nichols* - naming rights tier, fundraising tiers, and outfield signage lease. Like the idea of people contributing in a few different ways. *Goedken* talked about setting the levels and making sure they were distinct. *Fuhrmann* talked about the "I" model from Independence.

He would favor that approach. *Holtey* talked about cutting a “hybrid” of naming rights for the top levels and then using ranges for the additional levels. *The Board* asked *Goedken* and *Holtey* about the next steps. The plan needs to be set soon. *Gaard* asked that staff put together a couple of options to bring to board for their review. *Goedken* and *Holtey* shared the board that the options would be a part of an actionable agenda item. Established a Special Meeting to present and consider action on a plan. Special meeting will be held on Thursday, March 6 – 5 PM. *Fuhrmann* would need to call in. *Bakken* won’t be able to attend the meeting.

9. Financial – Budget, Community Foundation and Grant Updates

Fuhrmann asked about H/M investing. Asked about creating a special fund for this money. *Goedken* and *Holtey* shared that the H/M funds are yielding a percentage through a money market. *Kerndt* talked about the percentage yields with Community Foundation. *Holtey* shared about the Community Foundation funds being subject to “market forces.” Will look into this further, especially with the Community Foundation. *Goedken* shared that there are guidelines as a city, and the best resource is the City Clerk.

10. Other Business - Nichols - shared an opportunity to offer a summer mountain biking program. *Holtey* responded he would bring it to Blake and Mallory, and they could set up a meeting to talk through it.

11. Adjourn – *Fuhrmann* made a motion to adjourn, *Kerndt* 2nd, Ayes: 5 Nays: 0; Motion Carries.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Holtey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Parks and Recreation Director