

# PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 06, 2024 at 5:30 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

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## A. CALL TO ORDER

PRAC Chair Chris Mertl called the meeting to order at 5:58 PM

## B. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Chris Mertl, Makayla Pfaff, Josh Anderson, Paulette Schirmer, Charles Westmoreland, Christina Mounce, Portland Highbaugh

**Absent:** Emma Van Nes, Danika Swanson

**Staff Present:** George Schaaf, Parks and Recreation Director; Lauren Verrelli, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director; Lauren Anderson, Treadwell Arena Manager; Michelle Hale, Assembly Liaison; Annie Carroll, Parks and Recreation Staff Liaison

## C. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. February 6th Director's Report

## D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Mertl suggested that the agenda be rearranged to cover Staff Reports after Public Participation on No-Agenda Items. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve the agenda as amended. No objections were heard, and the agenda was approved.

## E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2. Minutes from December 5, 2023

Ms. Schirmer motioned to approve the minutes for the December 5th, 2023 PRAC meeting. No objections were heard, and the minutes were approved.

## F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Rob Roy, a resident of downtown Juneau offered comment on the Christopher Trail. Mr. Roy expressed concern that there have been alterations made to the trail last summer to change it from a pedestrian trail into primarily a mountain bike trail. He shared that he, and the trail users he's spoken to, are upset about this change.

Mr. Mertl asked Mr. Schaaf if he had any knowledge of these changes. Mr. Schaaf stated that he would be happy to prepare a report for the next meeting with information on the trail.

## G. NEW BUSINESS

### 3. Abandoned Vehicles Policy – Presented by G. Schaaf

Mr. Schaaf began by explaining that there has been an increase in abandoned vehicles in Parks & Rec lots and garages in recent years. To solve this problem Parks & Rec has worked with the Law Department, to change city code to extend Parks & Rec the authority to impound vehicles in place. It is his hope that this policy will give the department better tools to manage abandoned vehicles as citations have not acted as a sufficient deterrent in these cases.

Mr. Westmoreland said that a month seems incredibly generous for a car to be considered abandoned and asked how often vehicles that have been left for 3 to 4 weeks are retrieved by their owner. Mr. Schaaf answered that while vehicles abandoned for weeks are rarely retrieved, these time periods were selected because they are what is required by state law which supersedes city code.

Ms. Schirmer asked if this policy proposes that auctions take place throughout the Juneau area based on where the vehicle is located. Mr. Schaaf answered that that is not the case; the department would use the same online auction service the CBJ uses for police impounded vehicles and surplus equipment.

Mr. Anderson motioned for the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Director adopt Policy No. 100-006. No objections were heard, and the motion passed.

**4. Glacier Valley Rotary Club Riverside Rotary Park Weed Removal – Presented by G. Schaaf**

Mr. Schaaf explained to the PRAC that there has been an excessive amount of aquatic weed growth in the pond at Riverside Rotary Park and that the options for limiting the weeds growth have been limited. The department was approached by Charlie Williams from the Glacier Valley Rotary (GVR) with an innovative solution, and he is present tonight to share more information.

Mr. Williams shared with the PRAC that GVR wants to purchase a machine called The WaterShark that will cut the milfoil weed in the pond so that it can be harvested from the shore and disposed of either through Juneau Composts or the community gardens. He said removing the milfoil will be beneficial to the ducks, allow for more ice skating in the winter, and prevent people from becoming entangled should they fall into water. Mr. Williams asks that the Parks & Rec department provide storage for the machine at their Riverside facility. GVR intends to fundraise for the purchase of this machine which they will maintain and operate themselves, therefore not impacting the department's staff time.

Ms. Mounce expressed her support of the idea; however, she noted that Invasive weeds should not be disposed of through compost, and the milfoil appears to be aggressively spreading. Mr. Mertl asked if there was any collaboration with Audubon or Fish and Game to develop a strategy for protecting the natural habitat by potentially only removing a portion of the milfoil. Mr. Schaaf shared that the department will not move forward until they have consulted with Fish and Game.

Ms. Highbaugh noted that the GVR letter of intent mentioned that the WaterShark could be a shared investment opportunity which could be used at twin lakes. She then asked if GVR will need funding from Parks and Rec in the future for this machine. Mr. Williams answered that GVR doesn't Invision needing funding at this time.

Ms. Pfaff motioned for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to recommend that the Director accept the donation of an aquatic weed harvester from the Glacier Valley Rotary Club, and work with the club to clear aquatic weeds from the Riverside Rotary Park Pond following consultation and evaluation from the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game. No objections were heard, and the Motion passed.

**H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None**

**I. STAFF REPORTS**

**5. Treadwell Arena Update – Presented by L. Anderson**

Treadwell Arena Manager Lauren Anderson Presented the PRAC with updates about the division's programs and operations. Ms. Anderson's presentation provided information about the arena, its purpose, and core user groups as well as about recent and upcoming improvements to the facility.

Mr. Westmoreland asked about why The Juneau skating club has been using the facility less since 2019. Ms. Anderson shared that the organization has faced challenges with their group lesson program, but

that numbers are on the rise. Mr. Westmoreland asked what plans there are to acquire more full-time staff members, and if more funding will be necessary. Ms. Anderson shared that the arena is requesting a slight increase in funding, however the division is currently restructuring to make more full-time positions which will help with cost savings.

Mr. Mertl asked about when or if a second sheet of ice will be added to the arena. Ms. Anderson answered that a second sheet of ice has been added to the CIP list and will be pursued after a study is executed. She noted that other facility improvements such as space for dry land training, meeting rooms, and increased on-site equipment storage are currently a higher priority.

Mr. Westmoreland asked about Treadwell's current revenue vs annual expenses and how a second sheet of ice may impact that. Ms. Anderson answered that Treadwell's operating revenue for 2023 was just over \$460,000, and operating expenditures were \$884,000 including personnel and building maintenance. She added that financially it would be best to have the second sheet as close to the existing facility as possible so that the ice resurfacing and staff resources can be shared.

Mr. Anderson asked about the prospect of hosting events with concessions and beer gardens at the arena. Ms. Anderson answered that they found it difficult to find businesses with the resources to bring additional staff offsite for such events, and that the prospect was not as popular as they initially hoped.

**6. 2024 Project Update – Presented by G. Schaaf**

Mr. Schaaf updated the PRAC on the capital improvement construction projects. He shared that Improvements to Savikko Park and Capital Park are going to be completed this year in the spring and summer. Projects planned to start construction in the summer of 2024 include playground replacements at Sigoowu Ye Park, Si't Tuwan Park, and Eagles Edge Playground. Improvements to the pathway and lighting at Riverside Rotary Park, and the creation of a parking lot for the 35 Mile ORV Park are both scheduled to begin in 2024. He also shared about ongoing projects at Adair Kennedy Park, The Hank Harmon Public Range, and Kaxdigoowu Heen Dei Trail that will be advanced this year.

Mr. Anderson asked if there have been any plans for extending the length of the range out to 1000 Yards at The Hank Harmon Public Range. Mr. Schaaf answered that there was discussion about extending the range, however that would substantially increase costs beyond the budget, cause delay and require a greater level of environmental review.

Mr. Mertl asked about the Dupont Trail bridge replacement. Mr. Schaaf confirmed that an engineer from the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) confirmed by their assessment the bridge is going to fail imminently and that they are open to working with CBJ and The Forest Service to get it replaced. Parks & Rec has been working with Trail Mix to apply for a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant for these improvements. There has been a delay to this project as DOT has refused to grant permission to reconstruct the bridge because part of the Dupont Trail is in an area where DOT has plans to build a road to Atlin, British Columbia.

**J. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

Mr. Mertl shared that the Lands, Housing, and Economic Development Committee met to discuss housing, Telephone hill, updates on tourism, and the results from the visitor survey which provides insight on how people are experiencing our community.

**K. NEXT MEETING DATE – March 5, 2024**

**L. ADJOURNMENT – Ms. Schirmer motioned to adjourn. No objections were heard, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:09pm**

Respectfully submitted by Annie Carroll 2/27/2024, Approved at March 5<sup>th</sup> PRAC Meeting