

Parks Commission
Tuesday June 18, 2019 / 6PM
Meeting Location: Montpelier Police Station Conference Room

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners present: Kassia, Dan, Carolyn, Shelby

Staff Present: Geoff, Alec

Public Present: Dona Bate

- 6:00 Call meeting to order - meeting called to order at 6:09pm
 Approve May meeting minutes
 Approve May special meeting minutes
 Approve June Meeting Agenda
 So moved and passed.
- 6:10 Comments from the public
 None.
- 6:10 Park Staff Update
- Parkapalooza debrief
 - Most successful to date - lawn signs were a success
 - No alcohol sales, decided not to pursue that
 - Invasives/Tree Planting Updates
 - NCCC group has made a dent in the invasives
 - completed a bunch of tree plantings in the knotweed (a few hundred trees) in North Branch Park
 - Other trees added all over town this spring and along the bike path
 - The bike/shared use path is not a park, but parks staff are occasionally asked to help with it and do, and sometimes it is a good place to engage volunteers
 - Should add shared use path to a future agenda, to manage our involvement along the rivers and help maintain the area surrounding the shared use path - we need to determine if the budget matches the needs
 - Invasives control is a big part of this, their removal is part of the building contract but we need to know what methods, if they will come back

- North Branch trail names and signage
 - Staff met with MAMBA and trail contractor, construction won't begin for at least another month because of scheduling
 - MAMBA proposed a legislative theme for trail names, Parks Staff would like names to be more descriptive and clearer for users
 - Should we engage public for trail naming? Could be hosted online, take suggestions, then announce at a parks meeting.
 - We could give a theme
 - Geoff likes when the trail names gives you a sense of place, connecting you with the nature around you, etc
 - maybe do a survey with a map of the trails/photos of the trails, and people could suggest names or choose names from a list
 - Staff and MAMBA have a shared goal of having clarity on trails before they end up with different names on a bunch of different websites/etc.
 - For now MAMBA will add numbers to intersections/maps and no biking signs to trails where biking is not permitted. We will pursue a public naming process in the fall, when the new trails are complete.
 - Wooden signs in Hubbard Park are nice looking, but hard to see if you are moving past quickly (like on a bike) can we add colors or some signifier so that bikers can navigate without having to stop
 - Put up all the signs in the park and then add two or three colored loops to make navigation easier
 - Wayfinding signs will direct people to Hubbard Park, but will not help people navigate the park
- Memorial Tree Planting
 - Family has requested to plant a flowering tree and install a memorial plaque in memory of a lost child
 - Potential location is in the Peace Park by the shared use path
 - This path, once gone down, may result in an eventual reality of parks functioning as memorials. Does that impact enjoyment of the park?
 - May need to set a policy of limits on memorial size, duration (i.e. remove plaque after 5 years), minimum donation size amount to cover the maintenance
 - There is already a precedent of two memorials existing in the park
 - Could we shift the memorial to something we need (i.e. benches, pavillions, etc) and set a limit of the plaque existing in the park only as long as the

bench/tree/etc, and is removed at the end of its useful life. Plaques should be small, discreet, and there for the purpose of the family to see, not large and showy.

- **Parks staff will put together a draft policy on memorials and reach out to the family to let them know that we are working on a policy and will reach back out to them when that policy is complete.**
- Budget
 - Currently \$21,000 budget surplus
 - Around \$8,000 from Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) money that is restricted to energy improvements that are still being worked out, Geoff has had experience rolling CIP money into the next fiscal year in the past, staff will ensure that is still possible
 - Remainder is from extra grant money raised and the insurance money from the Chevy, which will go directly back into a new truck (which has been ordered, so that money is spent)
 - Budget is basically balanced
 - If there was extra it could be rolled over into a special fund that could be tapped into (with City Council permission) for special projects at a later date
 - **Staff is approaching being set up to send a report to Parks Commission, will begin doing so quarterly, and a year-end wrap up after expenses have closed for the previous fiscal year**

6:50

Parks Planning/Mission/Vision Update

- Debrief from 5/28 special meeting
 - Felt that it helped get the commission on the same page, and to provide clarity on what commission does and what falls to the staff
 - Was great to have the space to have a meeting dedicated to that kind of conversation, without conflicting with usual commission business
 - Do we need position descriptions for new parks commissioners, to give clarity to new members
- Discuss “homework” from 5/28 meeting
 - Important and Urgent -
 - implementing Greenprint,
 - creating standardized policy around dealing with conflict and impact reports.
 - Making sure that the important relationships with various departments of the city and met and maintained.

- Finding clarity in roles of commission vs. staff vs. city services. Could commissioners take on different specialties (i.e. one works on greenprint, one on community service/volunteerism, etc)
- Updating the website to add clarity and policies.
- Public engagement - getting people to connect to the parks and the Greenprint in a bigger way
- Important and not Urgent -
 - comprehensive set of policies that guide decisions (compiled and in place where public, staff, Commissioners can find them)
 - Develop/update management plans for the parks
 - Updating systems and policies around providing feedback between staff and Commissioners
 - Advocating for money in the budget and identifying new sources of money, not urgent because uses for money need to be identified before funding can be advocated for
- Urgent and less important
 - Dealing with individual conflicts in the park (once policy is created by commission, conflicts will be handled by staff, with fall back to commission when necessary)
- Draft a mission and vision statement

- **DRAFT Mission:**

The Parks Commission sets policies and advances a long-term vision that leverages resources, tools, and partners to ensure that parks, gardens, greenways, and natural areas are woven into Montpelier's community identity, and are forever available for the enjoyment of all.

- **DRAFT Vision:**

In Montpelier, our parks are a vibrant part of the fabric of every-day life. No resident is more than a 10-minute walk from a neighborhood park or playground, and no more than a 15-minute walk from a large protected natural area. The city is interconnected by greenways that enhance opportunities for residents, especially children, to move throughout the town on safe routes that maintain our connection to nature.

Montpelier residents retain their connection to the greater environment, including wild and working landscapes surrounding the urban core. This is a city where residents can

step out of their home and walk, bike, or ski to working farms, windswept ridges, or a network of regional trails. Residents always have opportunities to encounter wildlife within the city limits, and therefore, maintain a connection to wild lands outside of the city limits.

7:54

Final Staff Update

- Geoff's departure date is December 31, and he will switch to ~10 hours/week in July to help pass the baton to Alec and finish up some higher level tasks
- This may lead to some budget shortfalls, so hiring of replacement caretaker may need to be delayed
- Will this make the parks really understaffed for 6 months, until all vacant positions can be filled? Some, but less than Geoff has been during much of his tenure, so it is possible.
- Can the parks commission help? If it seems there is funding, lobby the city to move the start date of the replacement caretaker up.

8:05

Adjournment

Next meeting: Tuesday, 6/25, 6-8pm at the Senior Center