

MINUTES
CITY OF WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, MONTANA
PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2024

ACTION ITEMS

All:

- Review Proposed Parks Ordinance (in 2/1/24 meeting folder) and be prepared to discuss it.
- Complete any “unfinished business” you can at McStravick Park.

Tressa Blair

- Speak with Joni Short about her intended use of her property.
- If available, join Liaison in meeting with Mayor.

Jen Frazer

- Speak with Golf Board about formalizing cross country skiing on the Golf Course.
- Update T-Mobile Grant, as described below.
- Talk with Jane Ellison about working on walkable paths map.

Carol Berg

- Signs installed/secured at Bump Track/ maintenance needs at Bump track?
- Duck Race?

Kelly Huffield

- Prepare Press Release
- Explore the costs to repair/replace the sign at Joanna’s Park.
- *Adopt a Spot*: Finish getting agreements signed for next year. Get binder & agreements to City, place recognition signs.
- Work with Stacy Eaton-Menard on the basketball tourney?

Pattie Berg

- Send Kelly Huffield CORR info for press release
- Speak with School about ground covering plans
- Finish draft cover memo for Code, for Chair review/signature
- Meet with the Mayor (and Chair if she is available) to discuss issues below.

Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 4:25 p.m. by Chair Tressa Blair.

Members present: Tressa Blair, Carol Berg, Jen Frazer, Jordan Kibbee, Kelly Huffield.

Others Present: Pattie Berg (City Council Liaison)

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Carol Berg made a motion to approve the December 12, 2023 Minutes. Jen Frazer asked that these minutes be clarified to reflect that the Park's application should reference the Parks code.

Carol Berg accepted this as a friendly amendment. Jen Frazer seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Goals Discussion

Chair Blair began the discussion by saying that she wants the Committee to adopt a reasonable number of short-term goals which are attainable and reachable. Once those goals have been accomplished, the Committee can establish another set of attainable and reachable goals.

The Committee reviewed the FY22 priorities, the FY 23-24 budget request (which included Committee goals), the approved FY23-24 budget, and the recently adopted CIP list.

Committee members expressed frustration in the lack of work that has been accomplished. It was noted that the Committee has been meeting for 4 years and the only “on the ground” improvements that the public can see are the work at McStravick Park and the outhouses. The Committee feels that there is a lack of support from the Council and a lack of follow up on the part of the city to accomplish the work that needs to be done

Following discussion, the Committee set the following goals.

#1. Make Bair Park safe and accessible.

Committee Discussion:

- This has been the #1 goal for 3 years, and it must get done.
- The current fiscal year ends 6/30/24 and funds are available for this work in the current budget.
- Reasons contributing to the failure include but aren't limited to the lack of contractors willing to bid, a change in plans mid-stream, and possibly inconsistent information given to various contractors about the project scope at various intervals.
- A plan needs to be prepared by February - beyond that, contractor's schedules are probably already filled.
- If improvements can't be completed at Bair Park, the Committee may need to recommend its closure until the work gets done. This is a very busy Park and the public would not be happy about this, but the lack of ground covering is a significant liability.

In order to accomplish this goal, the Committee will take the following actions:

- The Liaison and Chair (if she is available) will meet with Mayor Nelson when he returns to agree on a strategy/plan to get bids out, and to prepare the bid package.
- Jen Frazer will update the list of potential contractors.
- If bids don't start coming in within a week or so of the letting, or if no one asks to see the project sites, Liaison Berg will personally contact potential contractors.
- Liaison Berg left the School Superintendent a message about the possibility of coordinating work, but hadn't heard back. She will follow up.

#2. Renovate Springs Park.

A. Committee Discussion:

- The Committee agreed that the T-Mobile grant was well done but its biggest problem was the lack of a preliminary engineering report which, according to Great West, is a requirement for most grant applications. In 2023, Great West quoted \$4,000 for this work.
- T-Mobile accepts grants each quarter. The request submitted in March of last year was denied in mid-May, so 2½ months later.

- In its FY23-24 budget request, the Committee committed to raising funds for new playground equipment at Springs Park. Possible sources include donations from local individuals/businesses, grants through playground suppliers, the Bair Foundation, and *Race for this Place* funds.
- Last year's playground equipment plan was very ambitious, and did not allow much room for 'free play', like running, on the playground.
- There is concern that, even if funding is available to get the work done, we may not be able to get someone to bid on the job.

B. In order to accomplish this goal, the Committee will take the following actions:

- On a motion made by Jen Frazer and seconded by Tressa Blair, it was agreed that the Committee will resubmit the T-Mobile grant by March 31, 2024. Jen Frazer offered to review and update the grant as needed. She will also ask Landscape Structures to prepare a playground equipment layout in the new footprint.
- The Liaison and Chair will ask the City for funds to have Great West Engineering write a preliminary engineering report for the park.
- Kelly Huffield said the *Race for this Place* Committee will be meeting soon to identify the process for awarding funds from the 2024 race. She will keep Liaison Berg updated, who will make sure a request for funds is submitted as appropriate.
- If the request to *Race for this Place* is unsuccessful, the Committee will work on a plan to raise funds for the equipment.

The Liaison and Chair will speak with the Mayor about completing the work in both Bair and Springs parks this summer. This may increase the incentive for contractors to bid work. If the school is also going to have some work done and needs bids, the incentive will be even greater.

#3. "Shore up" the Spike's Happy Trails Quit Claim deed.

A. Committee Discussion:

- The survey was completed last fall, so fencing can now take place.
- During budget discussions last year, the Mayor said he'd like to get the fence done by this spring. The plan, in concept, was to fence the north side of the property.
- Joni Short now owns the property to the north of Spike's Happy Trails. The Committee needs to find out what her intended use is of that property as it could affect the fencing plans.
- Committee members have seen members of the public in the Park. There needs to be signage placed which recognizes this as a City Park.
- It was reported that, greater than 30 years ago, there was some kind of deal made between the City and property owners regarding the use of City land on what would include the area west and south of Spikes Happy Trails. This could remove the access to the only true access point to the Smith River. The Liaison will investigate and forward information to the City Attorney.
- Under the quit claim, the City has the responsibility to fence this property and, under MT code, it is required to fence livestock out.

B. In order to accomplish this goal, the Committee will take the following actions:

- Tressa Blair will speak with Joni Short regarding her intended use of her property.
- Liaison Berg will follow up with the Mayor regarding any plans which may already be in the works to fence the property.

- The Committee will begin looking for outside funds for a fencing project.
- Liaison Berg will try to get the history of the use of City property on the west side of the park, and will forward this information to the Mayor and City Attorney.

#4. Complete the Committee tasks included in the CDBG Recreation Master Plan grant.

Committee Discussion:

The Committee recognized that when (not if) the City is awarded the CDBG grant, the Committee will have obligations under that grant, including:

- Facilitating two open houses
- Encouraging the public to complete surveys (surveys prepare by Great West)
- Preparing GIS Maps at the request of Great West staff. (This will be on Jen Frazer’s plate.)

Because these tasks will take time, and will be time sensitive, the Committee identified this as its #4 priority.

Liaison Berg will prepare a “Goals” document for review at the next meeting. She encouraged the Committee to present these goals to the City Council after they are adopted; possibly during its quarterly Council update.

Liaison Report

Draft Code: Review of Committee and Attorney Drafts and Direction to Committee from Council.

Liaison Berg explained that she had compared the City Attorney’s November 11, 2023 draft Ordinance against the Park’s Committee’s recommended code and had watched the video of the 9/19/23 Council meeting where the Committee’s draft was reviewed. Starting with the Attorney’s draft ordinance, she prepared a revised Ordinance which showed the differences between attorney and committee documents and which included the Committee’s suggested additions, and any questions which she thought remained.

P. Berg reported that, at its September 19, 2023 meeting, the City Council provided no clear direction regarding damage deposits and fees. However, at that meeting, the City Attorney suggested a (non-refundable) graduated administrative fee based on the number of attendees. The Attorney used the following example:

- < 15 attendees – administrative fee automatically waived.
- 16 to 25 attendees - \$25 fee
- 26 to 50 attendees - \$50 fee
- 51 to 75 attendees - \$75 fee.

The Attorney also suggested doing away with the damage deposit to avoid placing additional work on employees. However, the 11/11/23 draft Ordinance reflects the Committee’s initial plan: non-refundable administrative fees and refundable damage deposits, with the amount of these to be set by the Council.

In regard to smoking:

- The draft Ordinance, the City retains the right to designate smoking areas in/near parks. The Committee consensus is that, if smoking is to be allowed in the Parks (and the Committee still feels it shouldn’t be), it should be limited to parking lots.
- The Committee wants to place smoking stations in Radar and Springs Park. The consensus is that, even if the park is designated as non-smoking: people are going to extinguish their cigarettes and drop them

on the ground. Cigarette butts are toxic to children and the watershed. It was also noted there is a smoking Station at City Hall, so it's not clear why the Mayor wouldn't allow them in parks, especially since the committee was going to administer the recycling program. The Liaison will renew the request to purchase these smoking stations.

P. Berg said the language regarding the use of barbecues, fire pits, etc. is still a bit clunky. She removed a reference to 'broilers' and replaced it with "barbeques". She also proposed banning the use of charcoal. However, Kelly Huffield noted that *The Race for this Place* group uses a charcoal BBQ for its picnic, so charcoal should be allowed at the picnic shelter.

Because not all Committee members had completed their review, this item was to be continued to the next meeting. Jordan Kibbee has created a word version of this document, and it is on the drive. P. Berg reminded Committee members to only worry about content, not format, during their reviews: for some reason, the formatting gets messed up when changes are made, and she will deal with format issues once all have commented.

Strategy to get bids for ground covering work

See discussion above regarding coordinating the work at Bair Park, Springs Park, and, possibly, the school's, work at one time in an effort to make it more attractive for contractors to bid work.

Action Items Update for Items, including:

- CORR Report: Plan for adopting Recommendations, Press Release and Distribution of Report.
- Other items not included elsewhere in this agenda.

CORR Report:

Liaison Berg provided the CORR report, which was adopted at the last Committee meeting, to the Council and Mayor, and to the CORR group. She said that, after she had sent the Report in, she noticed that some more changes had been made. It was suggested that the Council should adopt the report. Liaison Berg will follow up.

Berg said that Liz Metcalf of the CORR group had responded to the receipt of the report. Metcalf said that the work seemed very positive, and asked Berg if she wanted to schedule a call to catch up. Berg said she hadn't responded yet, but will try to set up the call.

Press Release

At the last meeting, the Committee agreed to do a press release acknowledging the *Adopt a Spot* volunteers and announcing the availability of the CORR report. Kelly Huffield was voluntold to draft a press release. P. Berg will send Huffield language about the CORR report/ process for the press release.

Public Comment

No public was present, however Liaison Berg shared that the Mayor had included a vaulted toilet at Radar Park and Springs Park renovations in the request sent to the Commerce department for HB355 funds.

Set Next Meeting Date/Time/Location/Adjourn

The next meeting will be held on February 1, 2024 at 4:30 p.m., at City Hall.

The meeting was adjourned about 6:05 p.m.