Chair John Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm on January 5, 2021 via Zoom Conference Meeting

**Roll Call:**
**Members Present:** John Johnson, Chris Bol, Paul Teini, Pam Roland, Benjamin Stanley, Michael Harrison, Joseph Buckman

**Members Absent:** Chris Patchell

**Staff Present:** Sean Fletcher

**Commissioner Liaison:** Eric Cunningham

**Introduction of Guests:** None

**Changes to the Agenda:** None

**Special Presentations:** None

**Approval of Minutes:**
Paul Teini motioned, and Chris Bol seconded for a unanimous approval of the December meeting minutes.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:**
A. 2021 Department Preview – Sean Fletcher told the board the purpose of this document is to show what the department will be working on in 2021. Sean also mentioned the Youth Advisory Council applications are currently under review and will be narrowed down to 13 members from 67 applicants. The council will provide insight and ideas for programs and activities that should be offered to their age group. These applications are being reviewed internally and the selected members will be representative of all the neighborhoods. Someone from the Youth Advisory Council will also serve as a member of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. Sean Fletcher said the Graffiti Garden will provide a pop of color to Upjohn Park and will use 4 x 4 plywood sheets and posts to be painted by local artists. John Johnson was concerned the project might encourage more gang graffiti in the area. The garden will be in a well-lit, heavily trafficked area which will hopefully discourage tagging in that area of the park. Sean Fletcher let the board know the replacement of the Youth Development Center is dependent on funding and is currently part of a feasibility study. The next step is a conversation with city leadership to find where this project
would fit in capital planning. Sean Fletcher spoke on Now Mow Zones which will be in low-traffic areas with minimal activity. This project would benefit the environment and would save thousands of dollars to allocate elsewhere. The plan for opening Kik Pool will be contingent on the governor’s orders, but a decision should be made by February from a marketing and promotion standpoint. Sean Fletcher also commented on the invasive species at Spring Valley Park. This project will eradicate invasive plants in the park and will hopefully be funded by grant dollars. Paul Teini suggested a sign be installed showing people how to remove the plants at their own will. Sean Fletcher also mentioned arranging volunteer dates with the Landscape Coordinator, Maggie Chapman, to remove some of the plants. John Johnson thought the monarch way stations were a unique idea. Michael Harrison asked for comment on the Martin Luther King Park improvements and whether citizens could participate in that work. Pam Roland let him know there will be a date in May or June where volunteers will be needed to plant flowers in the flower beds. She would like to hold a community wide event on June 19th to celebrate the park improvements. Lastly, she brought up the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Wide Day of Service that usually happens in partnership with the City of Kalamazoo but was unsure if that was still happening. Sean Fletcher said he would follow up on the status of this event with the City Manager’s Office.

B. 2021 Calendar – Sean Fletcher briefly discussed an additional planning document with the group. This document illustrates the monthly areas of focus for the department. Many projects are set to begin in April, along with getting parks ready to open for the season.

C. Expiring Board Positions – Chris Bol motioned to approve Paul Teini for a second three-year term, seconded by Ben Stanley.

D. Board Members as Park Ambassadors – John Johnson would like each board member to unofficially adopt one park. This would entail watching for things like graffiti, tall weeds and general maintenance issues. This would help Director Fletcher and Deputy Director, Patrick McVerry, ensure all parks are consistently maintained. Pam Roland mentioned she passes by Martin Luther King Park and LaCrone Park multiple times a week to scout for broken lightbulbs and downed branches and reports the issue to the Parks and Recreation Department. Sean Fletcher added that the Adopt-a-Park program will be starting soon and will allow different groups to sign up to maintain a park. Pam Roland’s group has Martin Luther King Park, The Rotarians have Hayes Park, and Sean Fletcher has Southside park.

E. Park Volunteer Recruitment – John Johnson recognized Chris Patchell’s group of Crane Park volunteers that do an amazing job of maintaining the flower beds. He would like to know how the group got started and how that could be utilized in other parks. Sean Fletcher mentioned the department is in the process of hiring a second special event coordinator and part of their job will be recruiting and coordinating volunteer groups.

F. Ice-Skating in Parks – John Johnson would like to utilize a donated ice-skating rink in one of the parks. This topic has been discussed in the past but has been difficult to get started. Ben Stanley suggested reaching out to the Western Hockey Team for help with the project. Sean Fletcher said the biggest problem is maintaining the ice to
make sure it stays frozen, especially with how winter weather has been the past few years. John Johnson mentioned a space in Spring Valley Park that looks like it could hold water and be used for an ice-skating rink. Sean Fletcher said filling the rink might require help from the fire department, but worst-case scenario would be to just pump water from the lake to fill the rink. Chris Bol said he could go with a few board members at the end of the month to check out the space and test filling it with water.

G. Skate Park Graffiti – Chris Bol recently went to the skatepark at Upjohn Park and wanted a better understanding of what graffiti was being found. He was disappointed the gates were locked, especially on a day when the weather was nice. He stressed the importance of outdoor activities during the winter months and believes parks should be open when it’s dry out. John Johnson believed the graffiti to be gang related and will send photos to the board.

H. Glenn Park Update – Chris Bol said the project is currently waiting on the Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Associations approval. He doesn’t want to move forward on the project without them but hasn’t heard from them in a while. He wants to have a discussion with them to ensure all their questions have been answered and that the trail will fit into their neighborhood plan.

Event Recommendations: None

Comments: None

Citizens: None

Commission Liaison: Eric Cunningham thanked the board members who signed up for another three-year term and thanked the new members who signed up for their first three years. He agrees it’s important to get people outside especially during the pandemic and loved the ingenuity around the skating rink in Spring Valley Park.

Friends of Recreation Liaison Update: None

Parks and Recreation Director Monthly Report: None

Staff: None

Board Members: No comments from Pam Roland, Michael Harrison and Joseph Buckman. Chris Bol thought Davis Street Park looked fantastic. Paul Teini mentioned Davis Street Park is on his regular running route and noticed it was iced over on cold days and was concerned about the winterization of parks. Benjamin Stanley mentioned adding some lights at Fairmount Dog park for people who take their dogs there after work. John Johnson suggested a staff member send park maps and information to the new members to help familiarize them with the parks. There’s never been a formal orientation process for new members but that should be discussed at a future meeting.

Adjournment: 6:52 p.m.
The next Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom Conference.

Respectfully submitted by Shannon Keene, Recording Secretary

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Recording Secretary

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Chair