

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
March 7, 2023

Chair Paul Teini called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. on March 7, 2023 at Mayor's Riverfront Park.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Paul Teini, Michael Harrison, Ben Stanley, Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Kazmira Herberger

Members Absent: Katelyn Bekken, Joseph Buckman

Non-Voting Members: Isabela Ballez

Staff Present: Patrick McVerry, Shannon Keene

Commissioner Liaison: Esteven Juarez

Environmental Concerns Committee Liaison: Emily Demorest (absent)

Introduction of Guests:

1. Mayor David Anderson

Changes to the Agenda:

1. Gardening in City Parks
2. Community Cleanup
3. Park Rules

Special Presentations:

Approval of Minutes:

Rachel Hughes-Nilsson motioned, seconded by Michael Harrison for unanimous approval of the February meeting minutes.

Old Business:

New Business:

1. Milham Park Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant – Patrick McVerry told the board the department is applying for a Trust Fund Grant through the Department of Natural Resources for restoration of the upstream portion of Portage Creek at Milham Park. The project will be like the restoration process that was done on the downstream portion of the creek. The project will narrow the stream since there is currently an unnatural shallow depth to the entire creek. There will be riffles

to slow down the water and create pools for fish habitats. There will also be an accessible fishing dock. If awarded, construction could start in 2024.

2. Gardening in City Parks – Ben Stanley asked for information on how to start community gardens in City parks. Patrick McVerry said there are guidelines and an agreement that must be signed to start one. It is up to the group to manage the garden and if it is not maintained well, the city will take the plot back. Esteven Juarez mentioned reaching out to Remi Harrington since she has experience with community gardens and could potentially teach people how to maintain these plots. Rachel Hughes-Nilsson thought it might be a good idea to evaluate each of the parks to see what percentage of the park could be reserved for a community garden. Kazmira Herberger said finding the right people to maintain these is important because there are a lot of things that could go wrong, such as wildlife invading the gardens. She recommended reaching out to the neighborhoods to let them decide if they want something like this at their neighborhood parks. If Remi would like to partner on this initiative, then her contact information could be given out to the interested groups. Ben Stanley motioned to create a garden subcommittee, seconded by Michael Harrison for unanimous approval. Ben Stanley, Michael Harrison, and Isabela Ballez volunteered to be on the subcommittee.
3. Community Cleanup – Michael Harrison wants to see a community cleanup day organized by the Parks and Recreation Department. The department could provide sticks and trash bags for participants. Ben Stanley suggested reaching out to the people who've already adopted parks to plan a cleanup day. Esteven Juarez said the focus should be on people in the community already doing the work instead of just the Parks Department or City. Highlighting existing groups would make a bigger impact. Kazmira Herberger proposed planning an event for next year and reaching out to adoptees and other entities close to each park such as churches and schools to see if they would like to get involved. Some people or businesses may want to donate money or resources to this effort. Michael would like to see something happen sooner, so he will come to the meeting next month with options for a cleanup this year. Paul Teini would like to see a streamlined process for how board members can make these ideas happen.
4. Park Rules – Ben Stanley asked about consuming alcohol in public parks. He mentioned Portage allows this in all their parks except for two. Mayor Anderson said the social districts were created by the state as a response to Covid-19 to allow outside drinking in specific geographic areas.

Event Recommendations:

Adopt-A-Park Applications:

Comments

Citizens: Mayor Anderson looked up the state law on alcohol and saw that alcohol may be possessed or consumed in public parks, however the local municipality has control. It is possible Portage decided to allow alcohol consumption in public parks. The local ordinances do not allow that in Kalamazoo.

Commission Liaison: Esteven Juarez addressed his absence from previous meetings. Mayor Anderson said if the issue can't be resolved, he will switch the board representative.

Friends of Recreation Liaison Update: None

Parks and Recreation Director Monthly Report: None

Staff: None

Board Members: Isabela Ballez mentioned the Maple Festival happening at the Nature Center on March 11th. Michael Harrison mentioned male yoga at Rootead on March 16th. Paul Teini commented on the board's purpose and wants this to feel like a meaningful activity. He also informed everyone he is stepping down from his position on the board. He asked Michael Harrison to lead next month's meeting and to hold an election in April.

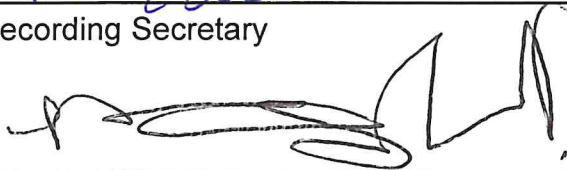
Adjournment: 6:58 p.m.

The next Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 4th, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at Mayor's Riverfront Park.

Respectfully submitted by Shannon Keene, Recording Secretary



Recording Secretary



Chair