

City of Baraboo
Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting
March 14, 2022 – Minutes

Present: R. Franzen, C. Schlender, A. Witzcak, J. Francisco, S. Mordini, A. Workman, H. Kierzek, M. Hardy

Franzen called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Legal posting of the agenda has been met. Witzcak motioned and Schlender seconded approval of the Feb. 14, 2022, meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Franzen moved to approve the agenda switching under staff reports 1 to 2, and 2 to 1. Witzcak seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items

a. Discuss and consider request from Friends of Baraboo Parks to donate playground equipment to be installed by volunteers in Ochsner Park

Witzcak reported working on bringing a challenge park to Ochsner Park for at least 3 years. The company, LSI, also installed the MS challenge course. Plan shown was a mock up, with flexibility on the layout (wood chips surrounding each element). A configuration other than a rectangle might require tree removal; the consensus is to not remove trees, if possible. Recommended equipment was shown; total quote \$52,375, including \$12,000 installation fee. If volunteers install it, the cost would be ~\$40,000. Kids and adults could volunteer to help with installation. If equipment were ordered today, it would take ~6 weeks to arrive, so installation might be closer to early summer. Mordini motioned to accept the Challenge Park proposal and recruit volunteers to install it, seconded by Francisco, at Ochsner Park. Motion carried.

b. Discuss and consider 2022 Spring, Summer and Fall hours for the Ochsner Park Zoo

The zoo will be one full time person short for the summer. Hardy reported that Zoo Manager submitted a summer staffing proposal where the zoo would close at 6 pm. Hardy was hesitant to close at 6 because 6-7 pm is still a prime summer time. Mordini and Franzen both commented that although regrettable, if there's no staff, the zoo can't be open. Witzcak asked if it would be better to shift to opening one hour later rather than closing one hour earlier. Hardy said according to Zoo Manager, the issue with opening later was that some animals get really noisy until they are fed. Attendance was reported at 40,000 visitors from the previous visitor counter. Attendance in the 6-7 pm time frame was a 3:1 ratio with the 9-10 am window. Hardy suggested another option: closing early Mon-Thurs at 5-5:30 pm, and staying open later until 7-7:30 pm Fri-Sun. Schlender suggested splitting the difference: opening at 9:30 am and closing at 6:30 pm. Franzen suggested being open until 7 pm two weekend days (Fri/Sat or Sat/Sun) and open weekdays 9 am - 5 pm. Kierzek asked if there is a day of the week that is less busy where it could be shut down for one day; Hardy said it's highly weather dependent, but staff has to be there daily for animal care anyway. Witzcak proposed as hours Mon-Fri, 9:30 am - 6:30 pm and Sat/Sun 9:30 am - 7 pm. Hardy said he would take it back to zoo staff to see what their thoughts were.

c. Discuss and consider Foam Fighters request for use of Langer Park every other Wednesday from 5-8:30 pm March 16-November 30, 2022 for role playing activities for co-sponsored fees of \$500

Role playing group used to rent gymnasium in Civic Center, but then moved to Langer outdoor space, and after a break with Covid would like to resume renting Langer park every other Wednesday. Group is comfortable with the co-sponsorship fee; they were a co-sponsor before Covid. Witzcak motioned to

allow the foam fighters to use Langer Park with a co-sponsorship fee of \$500, seconded by Mordini. Motion carried.

d. Discuss and consider naming new park and conservancy in the former Jackson property and authorizing up to \$2,500 in park impact fees for park entrance signage.

The park impact fees will allow for signs to be made this summer as residents will begin moving in soon. Cost of park entrance signs similar in style to other City park signs is just under \$2,500 for 3 signs (there are currently 3 public access points that require signage). The development is being called "Greenfield Reserve" so Hardy recommended naming it "Greenfield Reserve Parks & Conservancy." Mayor Nelson sent an email after speaking with Paul Wolter about naming it in honor of the Ho-Chunk village nearby, and recommended "Caramaunee" or "Walking Turtle." Hardy suggested bringing someone from Ho-Chunk into the naming process. Franzen suggested tabling the naming process until Hardy speaks to Ho-Chunk representatives.

Informational Items

a. Staff Reports

Revenues were \$23,017.28 for the month of February 2022

1) Upcoming projects & programs

Spring recreation programs are underway and a full slate of summer programs will be offered. The summer guide will be out in early April. Completed setting fees for Campbell Park plan (see RFP list in staff monthly report). Playground group will meet tomorrow about replacing equipment at Ritzenthaler Park and new equipment future park at old Jackson farm.

2) 2023 Budget preparations

Hardy sent a draft from the last meeting. From the community survey CORP plan, looked at cutting back in accordance with lower priorities indicated by the survey (need to cut \$112,000 from the Park budget. The plan is for the zoo and Civic Center losing the most in terms of budget, but it was felt these were areas where the loss could be made up with more donations. Franzen asked if volunteers could mow some areas of ball fields if it would save money. Hardy said Friends of Baraboo Zoo could potentially fundraise to pay for the intern positions. For years zoo has debated keeping monkeys, which are not native and due to weather often inside and unable to view anyway. The capuchins are in their 30's; usually live mid-40's, but both have diabetes and may be difficult to re-home, but converting that exhibit to a native species would save considerable money and staff time. Mordini asked if the money being cut will ever come back; Hardy said no, the cuts need to be sustainable for the mid to long term, but future optimism for growth as several new housing developments are underway which will bring in tax base, along with a new hotel bringing in room tax. Schlender suggested selling the property south of the ice rink since no use has been determined that is suitable for the area, as it may help in the short term. Hardy also commented that the police department will be leaving some open positions open to meet their budget cuts, and when the Parks Maintenance Coordinator retires that position could just be left open for a year or two. However, it's not clear when for sure when he will retire, and it may be difficult to meet maintenance demands with less staff. Mordini asked what the mission statement is for the Friends of the Zoo; according to the website, "The Friends of the Baraboo Zoo, Inc. was founded"...with the sole purposes of enhancing, preserving and promoting the needs of Ochsner Park Zoo." Hardy said originally the focus was a master plan to redevelop the zoo exhibits, but the current board is more involved and has done more small fundraisers and educational events. Hardy said the Friends of the Zoo seem amenable to fundraising for the intern positions. Schlender suggested that if we lose the capuchins, could we convert the

space into a bobcat exhibit. Francisco remarked that the CORP group was in favor of the monkeys going away; Hardy said he would explore homes for the capuchins.

b. Subcommittee reports

1) Friends of Baraboo Parks and Zoo (Witczak)

Witczak reported closing off the challenge park project, but the splash pad is still being fundraised for. They will meet and talk about Ritzenthaler and former Jackson property. A goal going forward is an inclusive playground for differently abled youth.

2) Bicycle Advisory Committee (Workman)

Tentative date for trail route marking at the Greenfield Reserve is March 26. Hardy will conduct a walk through of the property sometime the last week of March to mark any trees that should not be removed during trail development. The first work day for trail building with ~10-15 volunteers is tentatively planned for Saturday, April 2, 2022; Mordini commented that that is the same as the Mystery weekend, a huge event for Baraboo. The committee's next meeting will be Wed, March 23.

Francisco reported the gymnasium will be transformed into a special needs prom this Saturday night. 50 attendees are expected.

Next scheduled meeting: April 11, 2022, at 5:30 pm

Witczak motioned and Mordini seconded adjourning the meeting at 7:00 pm. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Workman, Secretary, Parks & Recreation Committee