

# City of Milton-Freewater

## Parks & Recreation Committee Minutes

**Members:** Jacque Barthel-Fox, George Gillette, John Mitchell, Danny Sanchez & Ryan Westman

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**Meeting Date/Time:** May 7, 2025 / 5:00 p.m.

**Meeting Location:** Police Department Meeting Room – 716 S Columbia St., Milton-Freewater OR.

### 1. OPENING

- a. Chair Ryan Westman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. A welcome to Kate Winters whom was recently appointed by the City Council and Mayor at their April meeting to serve on the committee. Her term will run through February 1, 2027.

Committee member(s) present: Jacque Barthel-Fox, John Mitchell, Danny Sanchez, Ryan Westman and Kate Winters.

Committee member(s) absent: George Gillette whom was excused.

City staff present: City Manager Chad Morris and Public Works Assistant/Project Aide Krista Gannon.

Citizen(s) present: Dave Fox, Wes Koklich, Leanne Steadman, Vince Ruzicka III and John Lyon.

- b. Adoption of Agenda – Ms. Barthel-Fox moved to accept the agenda as presented. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. All present voted in favor and accepted the agenda as presented for the meeting.

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Barthel-Fox motioned to approve minutes from the April 2, 2025 meeting as presented. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. All present voted to approve the April 2, 2025 minutes as presented.

### 3. PRESENTATIONS – N/A

### 4. STAFF REPORT/BUSINESS ITEMS

#### a. FY 2026 Budget Update

Manager Morris shared that included in the FY 26 budget that has been approved by the Budget Committee is planned to go to City Council for adoption at their June meeting is \$300,000 for tennis court improvements. He shared this is contingent on some anticipated state funding.

Chair Westman asked if there is still continued community support for these improvements, as previously shared. Manager Morris stated there is no firm commitment, however there is interest in commitment to replace with experienced and skilled parties with hopes of donating materials, equipment and labor still. Mr. Sanchez shared that tennis will be over by Memorial Day weekend and completely done by June and the year looking at one plus after season hopeful progressing to state competition. Mr. Mitchell asked if the plan was still to rip up the courts and replace

them. Manager Morris stated that it appears to be a sub base problem at the existing courts and that they would need completely removed and work started over. He stated that due to funding we may have to defer the additional removal of the old racquetball court demolition and walkway between the tennis courts and track but shared there is about \$3-\$4 million on the wish list, which would more than likely have to be done in phases. Mr. Sanchez asked if the school was helping with funding. Manager Morris shared that yes, the plan would be for some of the project to be funded by the School District. Ms. Barthel-Fox asked if the State was funding the project. Manager Morris shared that he is hopeful the \$300,000 would be partial state funding through grant funds. Grants would more likely be at the end of the next biennium, but will alleviate stressors in funding for sure. He shared that by June he hopes to be planning the improvements, yet not necessarily ground breaking of the improvements. Also included in the FY 26 budget are the improvements at Marie Dorian Park and the Freewater Park fencing around the new multi-use court. The Golf Course has \$40,000 for tee box and path improvements and another \$5,000 for the front steps to be replaced in front of the restaurant.

- b. **Summer 2025 Pool Update** – Manager Morris shared that a new manager for the summer pool season is slated to come on board Friday and that there are four certified lifeguards eligible for hire. He shared that we are still encouraging people to apply for lifeguarding positions and there are about 10 concession/front desk so far. Ms. Barthel-Fox asked if the new manager would be the Certified Pool Operator (CPO) as well. Manager Morris shared that the manager is getting their CPO currently and would have it well before the pool opens. He shared he would be introducing him once he is brought on board and paperwork is completed. Chair Westman asked what the capacity is per guard. Discussion ensued about the standard 40 swimmers per guard standard. Ms. Barthel-Fox inquired on if aerobics and lessons would be offered. Manager Morris shared we are not quite there yet but has one with experience so far, but it will come down to staffing on what is offered for programs this summer. Ms. Winters asked if information was sent to the schools. Manager Morris shared information was sent to M-F Unified School District. Ms. Barthel-Fox asked if it went to staff at WWCC, WWU, Whitman, etc. as each campus has aquatics and/or a program and director. Manager Morris shared there is a job fair at WWCC tomorrow and HR is going. Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that as long as word is out on campus we can hope for the best. She also shared that she was glad to see council members at the meeting.

Wes Koklich asked about the baseball field and weeds and bleachers. Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that was agenda item 6. He shared he wanted to learn and hear back and had visited fields last weekend. He stated that "stinky field" (Rotary Sports Complex) was a bring your own chair facility and was curious what the plans were to fix seating. Chair Westman shared we will get to that under item 6 and Staff Report was about complete.

- c. **Freewater Park Project Update** – Manager Morris shared the asphalt is done and concrete work would be underway soon with the concrete sidewalk along Robbins and staff had already set ecology blocks and had a bid out for fencing the multi-use court. He shared restroom repairs needed done along with some irrigation repairs from construction.
- d. **Summer Meeting Planning** – Public Works Assistant/Project Aide Krista Gannon asked the members what their meeting preference was for summer and if they would like to visit facilities as a way to start reviewing and getting reacquainted with facilities prior to the starting the review of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan for updating or what their thoughts were. In the past we had visited the various locations over several meetings and walked around them and looked at them and made notes but it is their preference and what the summer is looking like for meetings. Chair Westman asked

how much could be achieved and if we were going to hire a consultant to update it. Manager Morris and Ms. Gannon shared that the update would be done most likely without a consultant since the initial plan was turned over to the city in editable format.

Discussion ensued.

Wes Koklich shared that with the Master Plan he recalls places that are not good and it would be ideal to take a look at the worst and get estimates to work with.

Ms. Barthel-Fox recommended meeting at the pool with the new manger to see the vision for this year on site in June. A motion for the June meeting to be held Tuesday, June 10, 2025 at 5 pm at the Joe Humbert Aquatic Center was made by Ms. Barthel-Fox. There was no formal second, however, all present agreed to have the June meeting at the aquatic center. Everyone will meet in front of the facility for a tour at 5 pm.

**5. CITIZEN COMMENTS – merged with 6a**

**6. COMMITTEE REPORTS/BUSINESS ITEMS:**

- a. Little League Field Discussion – Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that she felt there had been some major oversights from prior meetings that Little League had come to and expressed interest in helping and wanting to contribute to improvements at the Yantis and Rotary Sports Fields. She asked what the protocol was with committee minutes. Manager Morris shared the minutes go to him for review. Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that last year the club left a list of requests with the committee and felt supported and assured the facilities would be in good order. She asked how is it a priority if it has been over a year and the ball keeps getting dropped?

Manager Morris shared he wasn't here back when there was an active program or when it dropped off to know whose responsibilities were what. He shared there seems to be many unknowns between groups on responsibilities between the city, Little League and even the School District. Manager Morris shared that he and the mayor are having discussions to figure out answers and trying to revisit past agreements and understandings in place but many are verbal and are broken when new people take over and no trail is left leaving the need for written responsibilities. Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that over a year ago, Little League presented their needs and there was a conversation on matters to strengthen parks and recreation. She expressed it cannot be efficiently handled on the City Manager's plate and asked who manages and organizes projects? She shared that this major breakdown was completely avoidable and led to unfortunate events. Manager Morris stated that it is all his responsibility and he can delegate duties as he pleases but there are a lot of parks and not a lot of staff. Ms. Barthel-Fox asked if we needed additional season staff? Manager Morris stated we need more money to pay for those additional staff to be an option. Wes Koklich added that small parks were added and maintained over the years. Ms. Barthel-Fox expressed grace due to this being a staffing issue. She turned the floor over to the Little League President, Vince Ruzicka to make it right and how to avoid this from happening again. Mr. Ruzicka shared he would like to meet and take part and responsibility in their duties but there seems to be a lack of communication with Parks and Recreation. Mr. Ruzicka shared appreciation for the new roof on the announcer booth, new dug out benches and spraying of weeds at Yantis, repairing doors at Yantis and power is now available at Rotary Sports Complex. He shared they had a big field cleanup day that was a huge success with volunteers. Mr. Ruzicka finished up with thanking the city for what they have done and would like to work to further improve communication and maintain moving forward. Discussion ensued about the parking lot lines not being visible and

congestion, etc. Mr. Ruzicka shared that Little League has a board member in the pavement marking business that is willing to pitch in and help. He shared they did have a few items that need addressed:

1. Sink in Yantis concession – needs moved. City will move sink per Manager Morris.
2. Gate – emergency gate locked – no key on site. City will replace locks for access during games.
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> base dugout – someone has put a lock on the gate but nobody knows who the lock belongs to. City will remove lock.

He shared that the scoreboard and sound system are not working but they are working on replacing the system. The kitchen would need major repairs in order to cook in it again and safety is the top priority right now. Lastly, he shared that concession stand volunteers are needed if anyone is interested.

Ms. Barthel-Fox shared she was glad to hear things have turned positive since earlier this spring and that gains have been made.

Mr. Mitchell asked who is in charge of the McRae/Ireland Field. Manager Morris shared the City and School District are discussing this and need to get agreements in place with what is what and who does what. He shared the golf course is owned half by the city and half by the school for instance and agreements, leadership and many other factors have changed so it is time to have those discussions for the best outcome for joint use. Chair Westman said he was glad for the city's support and appreciates the Little League group.

Mr. Sanchez asked if there can be some clarification on restroom cleaning and stocking and use. He shared that he had asked for them to be cleaned and they were but the paper products were not stocked so he called Krista and she sent someone over to stock the paper products on a second trip. Manager Morris said he would discuss this with his department and ensure this was clarified that they were cleaned and stocked. The locks are now combination for tennis and little league joint use and they are to do basic clean up and lock up when done, which seems to be working well.

b. Parks & Recreation Staff Jobs Discussion – this was previously discussed under 6a.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chair Westman.

Approved as read this 23 day of July, 20 25.

By: Ryan Westman  
Ryan Westman - Parks and Recreation Committee Chair