

City of Milton-Freewater

Parks & Recreation Committee Minutes

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

Meeting Date/Time: April 16, 2024 / 5:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: City Hall – Court Room – 722 S. Main Street, Milton-Freewater, OR.

1. OPENING

Chair Westman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

New members since last meeting in February were introduced – Danny Sanchez and Jacque Barthel-Fox.

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

Committee member(s) absent: George Gillette.

City staff present: Parks and Recreation Supervisor Matt Chesnut and Public Works Assistant/Project Aide Krista Gannon.

Citizen(s) present: Markie McRae, Brittany Freemantle, Vince Ruzicka III and Jean Ann Mitchell.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the February 6, 2024 meeting were presented in packets to members prior to the meeting. **All present voted in favor of approving minutes. Minutes were approved and signed by Chair Westman.**

3. MILTON-FREEWATER LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL

Brittany Freemantle and Vince Ruzicka III were present representing M-F Little League Baseball. They shared that they now have 12 teams (six softball and six little league baseball) and are looking to rebuild the program once again. They shared they have all but two sponsors for teams, but have confidence they will get those covered quite quickly, as the outpouring of community support has been great. There are seven board members and are looking at this year as a transition year, but are certainly not going to turn down additional support or sponsorship funding for the club.

Ms. Freemantle and Mr. Ruzicka III shared the following concerns and/or requests:

Little League members shared that they feel the irrigation boxes in center field are a safety hazard due to being sunken in. They asked if those could be moved out of the area of play. Matt Chesnut shared that unfortunately that is a mainline for the entire park irrigation system that isn't a simple move, but staff could and would certainly look into raising the low spot and addressing it so it is no longer a safety hazard for tripping.

The group would like to re-establish the little league field with infield grass area and rebuild the pitching mound, eventually. Mr. Ruzicka III shared he is in close touch and works with those that maintain Borleske Stadium in Walla Walla and that they are willing to help and donate sod in the late fall for the field. Staff asked that they make contact with Public Works before any changes are made to review the plan and funding of such.

They also requested more keys and shared they would be willing to purchase new locks if needed for the facility. Mr. Chesnut shared that what is currently there is our city parks locks for ball fields and we have keys available. Ms. Gannon asked if they are checking the keys in and out moving forward. Ms. Freemantle stated they are keeping track of those, amongst many other things this year. They elected new officers and are trying to re-establish the program locally. The committee and citizens were pleased to hear of such program coming back for our youth locally.

Ms. Barthel-Fox asked if everyone that was interested was able to play and if they had enough scholarships to cover those costs.

Ms. Freemantle stated that yes everyone interested has been able to sign up and that a non-profit out of Hermiston has contacted them to sponsor several families unable to afford the fees.

Mr. Westman asked if they had heard of issues with the lighting at the field and apparently only about 2/3 of the lights seem to be working. Little League representation was not aware of such. Mr. Westman shared that a bid had been obtained for replacement and it was quite a lot of money and would require funding through grants, etc.

Discussion ensued about the items brought forth and there was a consensus that Little League would continue seeking funding through grants and donations and bring forth any plans to the city prior to any commitments of work being done. Mr. Mitchell shared that the irrigation boxes need evaluated and repaired. Ms. McRae concurred that the safety concern needs evaluated and addressed. Members present shared their excitement for the reestablishment of youth ball in our community and expressed support of such.

Lastly, Ms. Freemantle asked about field use procedures for city properties. She stated that there is an adult league that plays at the ball fields and wanted to know how to handle a scheduling or use conflict. Ms. Gannon shared that organized sports groups are encouraged to complete a field use form through Public Works and that contact information is shared amongst all field users to coordinate field use amongst one another. She shared that currently there are two users that have completed such for organized events this year so far, One being Little League baseball and the other soccer through Jose Garcia. Ms. Gannon shared that the city prefers to not have to schedule the fields and prefers groups work together on use. It has historically been local community groups being given priority with youth and school-aged programs be offered first use which has worked well historically.

4. STAFF REPORT/BUSINESS ITEMS - YANTIS PARK ADA AND PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Chesnut shared that playground equipment installation is currently underway and the ADA improvements are complete.

Mr. Westman asked if there was a finish date set. Mr. Chesnut stated that there was not a date set yet for opening of the new playground. He shared that multiple irrigation lines were found to run under the play area and that once the play equipment was installed staff would need to place fabric barrier down and then the rubber chips could be placed. The placement of rubber chips will be quite an undertaking due to the large size of the totes requiring equipment to move them and empty them. Mr. Westman asked if it was known when those would be going in. Mr. Chesnut shared he is not sure of what that timeline is looking like. Ms. Barthel-Fox asked if the play area would remain closed until such time the mulch was placed. Ms. Gannon stated she believed it would remain closed due to the mulch serving as fall protection, but would share this with the Public Works Superintendent and inquire if there was a plan in place for when this would take place.

Jean Ann Mitchell shared that there is a community-wide make a difference day event planned for April 27 & 28.

Discussion ensued about the possibility and plan for security cameras to be installed at Yantis Park.

Ms. Barthel-Fox inquired on who the project lead was.

Ms. Gannon and Mr. Chesnut recommended Brian Steadman, Public Works Superintendent, be contacted with inquiries as the lead of the department.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS/BUSINESS ITEMS - Summer 2024 Aquatic Center Season Discussion

Mr. Chesnut shared a flyer he had been given from the Public Works Superintendent that was provided by the YMCA. The flyer is attached. Mr. Chesnut shared a statement provided by Public Works Superintendent, Brian Steadman received from Karen Hedine, CEO of Walla Walla YMCA "We are working on summer recruitment and have a Red Cross lifeguard course starting April 25. We've had no interest expressed locally for an adult to serve as the Desk/Concessions manager but efforts to identify candidates is ongoing."

Discussion ensued recommending this specific role be shared and posted at local schools, as many local school employees used to fill such roles in prior years. Ms. McRae shared that she had visited with the CEO Karen Hedine last summer about staff not being there on time to open on time and the concerns of cleanliness last summer. She shared she had wished she could have been there in February when Ms. Hedine came to present an update to the committee.

Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that the pool has had endless issues and we can do better. Ms. Mitchell concurred with the same feeling. Ms. McRae shared that we need to promote and build up the facility this year and share it is now heated and comfortable.

Upon reviewing the flyer information Ms. Barthel-Fox shared that a rate increase to align with Walla Walla is not applicable to our socioeconomic community.

Ms. McRae shared staff seemed unaware of what their duties were when visiting the pool and recommended a checklist be developed as a reminder and direction of duties expected of staff at the front desk and concession stand.

Ms. Mitchell shared that she frequently observed two staff at the front desk doing nothing and reluctant to greet her and agreed that it may be due to them not knowing or understanding the expectations of their job.

Discussion ensued on if the city had reached out and shared their expectations from the YMCA on customer service and facility cleanliness.

Ms. Barthel-Fox shared her opinion that as a community it is not ok to have the grit on the bottom of the pool and that she wrote e-mails and didn't see follow through.

Mr. Chesnut shared that the pool vacuum is fixed and that we have a backup spare pump.

Members were concerned about the proposed shorter season only offering 67 days for use this coming summer versus 98 last summer.

Discussion ensued in comparing operating hours and programs proposed for summer 2024 in comparison to 2023 and those present voiced that they have shared for many years the desire to

have the facility open from Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day weekend, as it was initially done and intended to get the most use out of the limited seasonal facility.

Discussion ensued and members present agreed to provide a list of their five top concerns with aquatic center operations to Chair Westman to request to present to council on May 13, at their next scheduled meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m. by Chair Westman.

Approved as read this 4th day of June, 20 24.

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