

**WILLMAR COMMUNITY ED & REC
JOINT POWERS BOARD MEETING
JANUARY 23, 2015**

Members Present: Eric Banks, Dave Baumgart, Scott Guptill, Tim Johnson, Audrey Nelsen, Lynn Peterson, Rachel Skretvedt, Charlene Stevens, Darin Strand, Liz VanDerBill

Staff Present: Steve Brisendine, Rob Baumgarn, Brad Bonk, Tammy Rudningen, Becky Sorenson, Jena Tollefson, Pam Vruwink

Guests Present: Tony LaPatka-Willmar Curling Club, Trudy Guptill, Beth Fischer and Kelly O'Farrell-Vision 2040

Chairman Eric Banks opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. He then asked Tony LaPatka to present his request for permission for the Curling Club to offer liquor for sale during the upcoming BonSpiel tournament. Kandi Entertainment Center will be furnishing staff to serve during the tournament. Darin Strand made a motion to approve their request. Rachel Skretvedt seconded and motion was carried.

Eric called upon Dave Baumgart who talked about the Belgian Waffle Feed fundraiser for the Baseball Boosters that is happening at Roosevelt on Saturday, January 24. He stated that 98% of proceeds go to programs and baseball projects.

Steve and Brad presented the latest revisions to the Park Plan created by SRF, along with cost estimates. Steve said that the plan will be presented to the City Council at their February 17 meeting (Tuesday, since Monday is a holiday). As proponents of this plan, Steve hoped Board Members would be present to show their support for this very solid plan.

Steve stated there were very few changes made to the bulk of the plan. One of the future plans for Ramblewood is to add an entrance into the park from the south. Another is the possibility of adding park space in Eagle's Landing – adjacent to land the city just acquired for – wet land space.

Steve informed the Board that 80% of playground equipment in the City is over 20 years old. This data was part of the decision to complete the Park Plan process.

Brad presented a report on **Robbins Island** upgrades. The Island would be one of two regional parks in Willmar. Acreage of the Island is approximately 65 acres. Combining Sperry Park and Thompson Park with the Island would make the regional park a better draw with regard to DNR ideals related to regional park designation.

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Robbins Island would be a passive rec area with Swansson being an active area with all the soccer and softball/baseball fields and aquatic center.

One of the changes at the Island would be an open area in the southeast part that will not be mowed, but instead planted in prairie grasses. Parking lots will be re-configured, with more spaces being added, from 180 to around 380.

Wetlands in the park would be restored with a board walk being built to accommodate viewing out over the water. The fishing piers would be cleared of overgrown brush.

A boat house by the beach is planned, housing summer rentals along with winter rentals. A four season shelter that could be used as a warming house for winter ice skating, along with a room available for rental for birthday parties, etc is proposed.

Adding more wetland area by shrinking the beach size is also in the plan. This would create less maintenance for the city and hopefully will be of assistance with the water quality of Foot Lake.

Guri Endresen Shelter would be renovated or rebuilt allowing for more flexible use of that facility especially if/when the amphitheatre gets built, allowing Guri to be the staging area for that venue.

Leaf and Green Shelters would be replaced with a new shelter and removing some trees to make a safe winter sledding hill is in the plan.

Tim Johnson asked if there would be a soccer field at the Island. There will still be green space that can be used as a practice field (but, probably not a game field) as we have enough venues in town to accommodate organized games.

Eric Banks asked about boat and equipment rentals, if there will be a designated area for usage of the equipment, to avoid liability if people get out too far in the lake. Steve responded that will be more thoroughly studied as we enter into that phase of the plan.

Swansson Complex is the second proposed regional park. Changes include a proposed dog park at Lions Park's western side with the east side left as an open area for picnics, etc.

North Swansson – re-do the parking lot, rotate Blue field so home plate in on the north side instead of the south side. A plaza with playground equipment is planned for the area between Red, Yellow and the newly changed Blue. A new concession building is planned for Orange, along with a

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batting cage between Red and Blue, this concession facility will include new restroom facilities to meet the needs of this area. Re-configuring the parking lot will increase the number of spaces and allow for better movement in and out of the park. A practice infield is also proposed for the very east end of the property allowing teams to get in infield practice while the other fields have games on them.

South Swansson changes include moving the skate park and creating another baseball field in that space and adding parking south of the stadium. This additional ballfield will meet the needs of the teams going into the future.

Other improvements include adding features to the Aquatic Center (ie lazy river). Adding a parking lot on the north side of the soccer fields is also in the plan. There are also comments about some land south of the DOAC that might be available for future park enhancements.

Northside Park - the baseball field would stay the same. Playground would be moved and a plaza added so parents can watch their kids on the playground or the field. The tennis courts would be re-built into a pickle ball court. A basketball area would be added to the north side of the property.

Rice Park – the wading pool will be removed and green space will be in that location. Horseshoe pits would be moved to the south portion of the park along with the basketball court. Remove the tennis courts. A splash park to replace the wading pool is in the plan along with moving the shelter to the northwest corner of the park, which would create a better flow to the park.

Miller Park – Increase tennis courts from two to four. Move basketball court. Rotate the baseball field so home plate and bleachers are on the north side allowing parents and fans to use the Jefferson parking lot (and possibly the St. Mary's lot). New playground equipment is needed to replace the current aged equipment.

Lincoln Park – Remove tennis courts. Rotate baseball field so home plate is in the southeast corner instead of southwest. An area in the southwest would be an ice rink in the winter with a four season shelter, along with a plaza for picnic tables. Also a basketball area is planned. Steve mentioned the possibility of extending 9th Street to Trott Avenue. City and School staff are talking about an exchange that would transfer the remaining land owned by the School to the City. This would allow more access to the southwest of the park.

Ramblewood Park – Mainly a nature area with Ramblewood Slough as the main part of the park. Creating a boardwalk into the wetlands along with expanding the trails (unpaved) is part of the plan. Other projects include creating a native garden, improving the playground, adding a basketball area with the main proposal being creation of a driveway entrance into the park from the south.

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Steve asked if there were any questions. Liz VanDerBill asked about acquiring land and how that process is handled. Charlene Stevens responded that usually is done by the City purchasing land, occasionally the City can acquire by eminent domain or the owner will donate or gift the land to the City. One other way is the City requiring new developments to set aside some land for a park or green space. The proposed drive to access Ramblewood from 19th Ave SW would require using land belonging to Community Christian School so a discussion would need to happen with them.

A survey was presented regarding parks and towns of similar size as Willmar. This survey showed that Willmar's park system was very similar to the several towns surveyed. Where Willmar did not compare as well was the staffing of and maintenance budgets for these systems. Willmar's annual park capital allotment was amongst the lowest for these communities but that amount can change because of one or two big projects.

Tim Johnson asked if SRF had done any estimates on what maintenance would cost. Steve replied that they had not done that yet. Proposed sources of money for the park projects are Legacy Dollars or getting approval for a sales tax percentage increase to go towards projects or using the general fund the city appropriates annually.

The next item presented to the Board was the budget created by SRF regarding the cost of the plan. The proposed cost for everything is in excess of \$22 million. That amount represents if everything in the plan took place and that it represented today's dollars.

Trudy Guptill asked if it was possible for the 2040 group to work on the planning stages. Charlene responded that the City would work with stake holders. Ms Gorans also asked if Community Ed & Rec staff would be in charge. Charlene stated that CER and Public Works would be working together. The plan is to break into committees to specialize in areas, ie shelters, playgrounds, ball fields.

Audrey Nelsen asked about maintenance dollars, using parks year round will increase maintenance issues and staffing. Steve responded that no, not yet, that will be added when the park plan is put into place. It was stated that the City Council should be aware of what other cities offer. Willmar needs to be progressive in the amenities we offer to encourage people to stay in Willmar and move to Willmar. Rachel Skretvedt said that it comes down to quality of life. Willmar is a hub of the west central area and needs to show that to surrounding towns by the amenities we have.

Charlene Stevens said that 1.8 million per year was raised the last time we had a sales tax implemented. This tax has been put in place twice recently; to build the public library and again to build the connection between the Civic Center and the Blue Line Center, add trails and improvements at the industrial park.

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Scott Guptill mentioned there are huge expenditures needed at the Arena. The question of Garfield rink being closed arose. Steve responded by saying closure would depend upon usage if/when the new facilities are created.

Liz VanDerBill asked about staffing at the holidays. Staffing at the warming house has been limited to weekend as weather permits for the last few years as budgets for part time staff were reduced. It was announced that Vision 2040 would be hosting another movie night at the Arena on February 20.

Rachel Skretvedt asked if there were plans to have skate rental at the Island when the plans for an ice rink were complete. Steve stated that was part of the plan and responded that Troy is working on getting more rental skates for the Arena.

Darin Strand stated that he, Audrey, Liz and Steve have been working on a job description for the Joint Powers Board. Please look over when you receive so changes and/or adoption can be done at the next meeting.

Steve updated the Board on the City Auditorium status. The Gun Range is done, except for the air handling system. We are waiting on delivery and installation; hopefully this will be done by the end of February. We are planning on re-opening the Auditorium by the middle of March. A question was asked about who was in charge of the Auditorium. Steve responded that no one was in charge but the Gun Club did a fairly good job of managing the Range. Rental fee have to be look into. Should the Auditorium be a revenue source or should tax dollars be financing it? Scott Guptill asked if people would stop using the Range if the fees went up too much.

Liz VanDerBill informed the Board that the School Board has called for a meeting to discuss facilities. They are hoping to have a bond referendum on May 12 or 19 to vote on proposed plan. Liz said it sound like the Board is interested in a field house or adding gym space at the high school that can also be used as a field house. One of the proposals is for a dedicated gymnastics room which would free up gym space.

Audrey Nelsen asked about the indoor playground at the City Auditorium. According to news reports, the area that housed the indoor playground will be used to hold most of the HVAC system. Steve agreed, saying the Jefferson's playground has been opened to the public on Fridays from 12-4. There is a possibility of adding a playground on the stage. Audrey stated that people were told the playground was temporarily closed and asked if there was anything we needed to do now that it is permanent.

As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned. The next meeting will be February 27.