

Winona County Parks & Environment Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday January 4, 2022 - 4:30 p.m.

Ring Central

Committee Members Present: John Howard Marie Kovcesi
 Dale Hadler Matt Neil
 Amanda Gentry Steve Jacob
 Don Evanson

Staff Present: Kay Qualley Aaron Lafee

1.0 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Dale Hadler

2.0 Introductions and welcome new members (if appointed)

All attendees introduced themselves.

3.0 Election of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair, conducted by Kay Qualley

Chair: Matt Neil nominated Amanda Gentry; seconded by John Howard. No further nominations for Chair were received. The Parks committee voted on Amanda Gentry as Chair: Yes – All.

Vice Chair: Matt Neil nominated John Howard, seconded by Dale Hadler. No further nominations for Vice Chair were received. The Parks committee voted on John Howard as Vice Chair: Yes – All.

Chair Amanda Gentry assumed role of Chair.

4.0 Approval of Agenda

On motion by D. Hadler and seconded by M. Neil, the Parks & Environment Advisory Committee voted to approve the agenda. Vote: Yes – All.

5.0 Approval of Minutes of November 2, 2021 Meeting

On motion by S. Jacob and seconded by D. Hadler, the Parks & Environment Advisory Committee voted to approve the amended minutes. The Parks Committee amended the minutes to add verbiage on page 2 regarding keeping park utility for those who do not play softball or use play equipment in mind. Vote: Yes – All.

6.0 Stone Point Park Updates

K. Qualley gave a power point presentation that included recapping information from survey conducted by Engage Winona regarding county/community priorities. K. Qualley also recapped ideas by the Parks Committee on how to improve the Parks trails and plantings to allow the public to enjoy the views and better utilize the Stone Point Park. With this information, Planning & Environmental Services will make requests to improvements within Winona County utilizing funds from the American Recovery Act for trail creation and improvements. The Parks Committee discussed the trail options, and the consensus was to remove some pine trees but to include some pines as part of a trail loop. There would be many pine trees remaining despite removing some for a trail. The Parks Committee asked if the County had equipment to groom trails. Per K. Qualley the County does not, but it could be a possibility to utilize grants for that after the trails are established. Consistent snow cover is a key variable needed for cross country skiing.

Improvement goals for Stone Point include building new trail connecting to existing parking area, create lawn panel area for picnics and utilize overflow picnic tables from Farmers Park. The trails would include native plantings, remove of some non-native evergreens and trees to enhance views at key points. Future budgets would add mowing of the trails if ARP Act funding comes through.

7.0 Apple Blossom Park Updates

K. Qualley recapped 2021 estimate to pave the parking lot and create a path to a wheelchair accessible picnic table, which was \$35,000. Additionally, discussion ensued about funding for a pavilion and paving for four cars off of Aerie Lane (in future) and creating a path to the pavilion. It is possible the Lions Club would assist with this project; contact will be needed to ascertain interest. K. Qualley suggested the possibility of linking to La Crescent trails and adding signage for the public based on conversations from dept. staff with the Apple Blossom Overlook group.

A. Lafee surveyed the park for damage after the heavy winds. There did not appear to be any fallen trees but there was evidence of campfires recently and the sign installed by staff indicating no fires was removed by someone and tossed in the weeds about 20 feet away. A. Lafee did recover the sign. The same mowing contractor was awarded the bid so there will not be a cost increase for mowing of the park.

8.0 Farmers Park Updates

K. Qualley recapped the Parks Committee's decision to add accessible play equipment, add trees where shade near play areas is missing, add new signage at the front gate and paving for a few cars along the township road to provide easier access to the Women's Lodge. This would alleviate costs for lawn repair that occurs now when the public drives on the lawn to park their vehicles near the pavilions/lodge. A. Lafee arranged for the removal of dead Cottonwood and split Honeylocust. The expense was outside of the 2021 Parks budget but after being discussed previously with the Parks & Environment Committee, Administrator Fritz approved the budget extension to remove these hazards.

A. Lafee surveyed the park for damage after the heavy winds. At Farmers Park, some shingles came off a pavilion. The bandshell roof had some damage, some fascia fell off and a tree fell on the powerline to the bandshell. A. Lafee met with the insurance adjuster and will be receiving a quote on the repairs for the buildings. The mowing bid for Farmers Park came in at \$295 per mowing as opposed to last awarded bid of \$475 per mowing. Someone that lives in the area provided the lower bid. Winona County provided balls and bats for Farmers Park and all were still there at the end of the season. As of the time of the meeting, 6 reservations for Farmers Park have been made for 2022. Winona County received compliments that the park was open until the end of October, instead of September.

K. Qualley discussed the ARP Act proposed budget of \$100,000 for park improvements at Stone Point, again. Estimates are needed for some of the suggested improvements and a discussion with Administration and the County Board will need to occur to determine if there is flexibility with the initial estimated park improvement budget from the American Recovery Act funds to get some work done at Apple Blossom and Stone Point, in addition to the \$100,000 for Stone Point.

9.0 Area Trails Update

No update provided.

10.0 Member Updates

John Howard: There is new BWSR program, to be administered by the Soil and Conservation District, to build native pollinator habitats that may be suitable for the parks. Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP) has a grant deadline which is in 1.5 months (before the next meeting).

Amanda Gentry: Added that the HELP program can be used on any long-term conservation lands or City and County parks. The grant allows you to apply for \$20,000-\$40,000 and only small watersheds, watershed districts and watershed management organizations can apply. The goal of the program is to install 90 projects covering about 1,000 acres to establish floral rich plots, riparian plantings or enhancing prairie, savannah, wetland and shoreland communities that are not currently dominated with invasive species. There is a 25% match requirement for the grant.

11.0 Reminder: sign or e-sign and return Respectful Workplace Policy form to Personnel Dept.

12.0 Next meeting date: March 1, 2022

13.0 Adjourn

On motion by S. Jacob and seconded by D. Hadler, the Parks Committee adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Schwertel
Administrative Specialist

Signed by: 
Committee Chair/Vice Chair

5/3/22
Date