



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of March 14, 2018

City Hall – Council Chambers
411 W 1st St



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Torch called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

II. Roll Call

Present: Erik Torch, John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby, Tjaard Breeuwer, Dudley Edmondson, Dennis Isernhagen, Britt Rohrbaugh, Tiersa Wodash, Kristin Bergerson, Michael Schraepfer, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison)

Not present: Dean Vogtman, David Kirby (ISD 709 School Board Liaison), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison)

III. Approval of February 14 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Schmidt motioned for approval of the February 14, 2018 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Edmondson. Unanimously approved.

IV. Presentations

A. Chester Bowl Operations Update – Dave Schaeffer, Executive Director, Chester Bowl Improvement Club (informal)

Schaeffer: Introduced Chester staff, Chester Bowl is a non-profit and is made of 11 board of directors. Expressed the need for the chalet renovation project. Shared a story of a child's grandparents unable to watch their grandchild ski in an ideal spot due to the current parking situation and inaccessibility of the staircase in the chalet.

Schaeffer: Shared the mission of Chester Bowl. Expressed the mission ensures the programs are accessible to anyone regardless of income.

Schaeffer: Shared about the meeting for the Chester Creek Concert Series, the 10 bands have been selected. Shared previous attendance of the past concert series events.

Schaeffer: Shared attendance for previous summer camp, 65 kids per day. Shared activities that kids participate while attending camp. Expressed all activities are spent outside, but chalet is used during inclement weather. Mentioned the closing date for registration for summer camp, anticipates to fill the lottery once again.

Schaeffer: Shared a report on last year's Fall Fest attendance. Stated events that occur during Fall Fest, as well as how much was raised for the scholarship fund.

Schaeffer: Stated the amount of growth with the ski and snowboard program compared to previous years. Last year was a record year for season pass holders. Stated the process of obtaining rental gear for the year as well as scholarship opportunities. Shared information for youth races.



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Schaeffer: Shared the history of Chester Bowl and how they operate. Mentioned current space is limited for current camp capacity. Mentioned that concession stand is cramped, staircase is not accessible, restrooms are not wheel chair accessible, and the chalet lacks energy efficiency.

Schaeffer: Mentioned how the city supports Chester with grooming operations and building support.

Schaeffer: Shared the layout of the current chalet, how it limits camp capacity. Stated that the motivation to make the space accessible for everyone was prominent. Expressed need for a permanent bridge as a year round solution. Shared when the ski hill will close for the season.

Schaeffer: Shared design of the potential chalet renovations, stated the public process. Stated the beginning of the Growing Up Chester Campaign.

Schaeffer: Stated two actions are required for this project including expanding the footprint and adding a deck to the chalet, there is conversation with the Planning Department. Stated that designs have not significantly changed from 2 years ago.

Schaeffer: Stated the sidewalks would reduce erosion along the newly reworked creek. Stated the permanent bridge would be wide enough for the groomer to safely get across.

Schaeffer: Stated fundraising target amount from cost estimates for contractors. Stated fundraising has not been pushed on the public, however, board members have participated already. Stated the current amount raised to date. Mentioned pledged plan of the fundraising program.

Schaeffer: Stated these changes would better serve Chester's mission. Shared story of family scholarship recipient, they now donate many volunteer hours and are heavily involved.

Torch: Stated he appreciated the update and opened to the public for questions.

Breeuwer: Mentioned increase in ski program is important due to nationwide trend of skiing.

Bergerson: Questioned the size of the deck.

Schaeffer: Confirmed the location and the approximate size.

Bergerson: Questioned outside seating for skiers.

Schaeffer: Confirmed it would be an all season gathering space.

Schmidt: Apologized for not attending the Chester Creek Concert selection meeting. Stated he was blown away by the number and quality of the talent of the concert series. Stated that folks are being brought in and using the park well.

Schaeffer: Stated that 56 bands applied and a stipend is given to the band members. Stated that this isn't the main factor of why bands pursue to play at Chester. Stated the setting and the nature draw



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in the band members and community.

Schmidt: Stated that talent isn't just from our area.

Schaeffer: Stated that members have applied from Milwaukee.

Schmidt: Questioned if Chester can provide programs for adaptive skiing.

Schaeffer: Stated the lifts are equipped for adaptive skiing. Stated that individuals go to Spirit for the Courage Program. Stated the building is not accessible. Stated that they have not considered a program before because of the already existing program at Spirit.

Schmidt: Commended Schaeffer for record keeping, stated that it is helpful.

Roche: Thanked Schaeffer for the presentation and the board members for attending. Stated that commissioners have been busy with action items. Stated that Chester Bowl has been a key partner with the city. Mentioned that not every municipality has a ski hill or the capacity to do so. Stated that he is open for questions now or after the commission meeting.

Schaeffer: Asked his crew if they had anything to add to the presentation.

Torch: Thanked Schaeffer and Chester Bowl volunteers.

V. Commission Committees

- A. Golf Committee – meeting date: Thursday, March 22 at noon in the Parks Conference Room
- B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: TBA

Torch: Requested update on Chester Creek Concert Series.

Roche: Confirmed selections will have an official release before the next meeting.

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Torch: Requested to reflect on what happened with the Lower Spirit site plan. Requested to not rehash what happened. Requested to discuss how the process could be improved going forward. Stated to make comments and he would compile information with Roche.

Wodash: Stated she met with Roche and discussed how they would like to see some communication between the commission and council.

Edmondson: Stated a letter was sent to the commissioners through the city. Stated that communication needs to happen from commissioners to the council members. Stated that it is disrespectful to the citizens that attend the Parks Commission meetings as well as the Parks Commissioners. Stated that representatives from the commission and council need to discuss why something is passed even after commission meetings. Stated that he contacted Gary Anderson to try



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and create a system where commissioners could give input after a failed proposal. Stated he would like to have a meeting with City Council before actions are final.

Westerlund: Stated having an automatic process should be developed when council is against commission. Stated that the process should be more formalized. Stated that a lot of time is spent reviewing by city staff, it is substantial when this happens. Stated the best form of communication would be in person.

Breeuwer: Stated hesitancy to speak at City Council meetings, feels it would over step his boundary. Stated he much prefers an automatic system for votes against.

Schmidt: Stated our role is to make recommendations to the mayor, city council, and Parks and Recreation. Stated he would like to see a task force to deal with this. Stated that if a project is set to be pushed through, he would like to have it known from the beginning. Stated that it was obvious that a decision had been made, it would be respectful on time for what is to be dealt with.

Torch: Stated that he agrees with the idea of a task force, will be discussed at the next E-Board meeting.

Edmondson: Stated we need a real clear definition of what real power Parks Commission has. Stated that Commission should have more power, but not have the expectation of having the final word.

Torch: Asked for any other comments.

Isernhagen: Stated that communication needs to be greatly improved. Stated that feedback from the community questioned the role of the commission. Stated that he wrote a note to the council members on why he voted in opposition from it. Stated that feedback from the entire group would have been appreciated.

Rohrbaugh: Stated we in the community put a lot of time an effort into this. Stated more feedback from the decision made by council would have been appreciated.

Roche: Stated there was a gap in procedure. Stated an agreement with Commissioner Edmondson and Commissioner Wodash that formal communication with council is needed. Stated that a procedure should happen for commissioners to ensure their concerns are heard. Stated that he has heard compliments about Parks Commission over the years, and they should not question their value. Stated that he takes responsibility for not developing a procedure for this event early on.

Torch: Stated this conversation will be brought forward to E-Board. Stated this meeting would develop a process coming forward. Asked commissioners and liaisons if they had anything else to report. Stated no liaisons report.

IX. New Business

Torch: Presented plaques to Schraepfer and Wodash, the departing commissioners. Thanked Schraepfer and Wodash for their devotion.



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Wodash: Stated she served for 4 years.

Schraepfer: Stated the commission has changed quite a bit for the better. Thanked commissioners for their dedication.

Torch: Thanked for Schraepfer for the observation.

Wodash: Stated it is bittersweet to leave. Stated she would stay in touch.

Schmidt: Stated Wodash has been a strong advocate for Lincoln Park. Stated Wodash will be missed greatly. Stated Schraepfer added a great role in questioning land management practices.

Torch: Thanked Schoonover for stepping in for the Parks Department.

X. Old Business

XI. Division Manager's Report

Roche: Mentioned Division Report, stated he would be available for questions.

XII. Public Comment

Michael Casey: Stated he represents Friends of Western Duluth Parks and Trails. Stated why the group has organized. Stated he wants to see meaningful input from the public on the Western Waterfront Trail project. Stated he was sad to see Wodash and Schraepfer leave the commission. Thanked the commission, said it takes courage. Stated the Lower Spirit Landing project never went through a robust public process. Stated their group would stay engaged, and more commissions need to be involved. Stated he hopes the Parks Department would utilize the commissions that are put in place. Thanked the commission for listening.

Bill Lynch: Questioned who would be present to prevent vandalism at Chester Bowl.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:21 pm. Moved by Commissioner Wodash. Second by Commissioner Schraepfer.

XIV. Next Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be Wednesday April 11, 2018 at the Grand Avenue Chalet at Spirit Mountain.