

**EAST GRAND RAPIDS  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING  
EGR COMMUNITY CENTER  
COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
5:30 PM  
Monday, August 28, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held in the City Commission Chambers in the East Grand Rapids Community Center.

Kate Skaggs called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Present in Person: John Arendshorst, Larry Fisher, Lauren Jacoby, Patrick Parkes, Bill Saxton, Kate Skaggs and Abby Sorota

Absent: Nick Abraham and Michelle Brown

Also Present: City Manager, Shea Charles, Parks and Recreation Director, Derek Melville and Sara Coffey

Guests: Ben Lane, Mike Lewis and Chris Meyer

**Public Comment:**

Chris Meyer, 350 Manhattan Road, East Grand Rapids. He, along with his wife, wrote a letter (included in agenda) concerning not turning Manhattan Park into a rental facility. He has made comments on the survey cards about the pickle ball courts being so close to his house. He is happy to hear feedback from commissioners. He feels there is no reason to expand the pavilion or add another one. Mr. Meyer would like the West side of the park to remain a community park.

**Report of Commissioners:**

**Patrick Parkes** - Happy back to school to everyone. Taste of East and Artisan Market were a success!

**Bill Saxton** - His kids go to school early to use the new playground. More bike racks are needed and voiced concerns about one specific piece of equipment not being used in its intended manner.

**John Arendshorst**- Excited about playgrounds, can't wait for others to open.

**Lauren Jacoby** - Excited to see the dog park looking so good!

**Larry Fisher** - Very excited about the trails in Manhattan Park.

**Abby Sorota** - School started last week. A big thing people are excited about is the bond proposal coming up in November. Information sessions will be held, PTO, meetings will have administrators present to answer questions. The high school is 60 years old and needs updating.

**Kate Skaggs**- Echoes the excitement over playgrounds, her kids said on the first day of school there were "lines to go down the slides".

**Review of minutes:**

Minutes of the July 24, 2023, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting were presented for approval.

MOTION to approve: Sorota

SUPPORT: Arendshorst

YES: Arendshorst, Fisher, Jacoby, Parkes, Skaggs, Saxton and Sorota (7)

NO: (0)

**MINUTES APPROVED**

**Election of Chair and Vice Chair for FY 23-24**

Arendshorst proposed to keep the Chair and VS Chair the same. All agreed, Skaggs and Parkes agreed to remain in their positions.

YES: Arendshorst, Fisher, Jacoby, Parkes, Skaggs, Saxton and Sorota (7)

NO: (0)

**Chairperson Skaggs and Vice Chairperson Parkes continuing their roles APPROVED**

**Special Event Calendar – FYI**

**Special Event Permits to Consider for Approval:**

**A: Gaslight Village Artisan Market** – Director Melville said if approved this makes the 8<sup>th</sup> road closure this year.

Saxton: Since this is successful does the City Commission need to add additional closures that can be requested?

Melville: Will make City Commission aware, they may choose to amend the ordinance.

Charles: The Tree Lighting and parades don't count towards the number of road closure limit.

Arendshorst: Do we anticipate any additional road closures or new requests?

Melville: I haven't heard of any other road closures.

Skaggs: Mentioned concerns for safety, will light be sufficient? Could be dark or quite dim at the end of the event.

Melville: We will look into that.

Sorota: Glad they are doing it again.

MOTION to approve: Jacoby

SUPPORT: Sorota

YES: Arendshorst, Fisher, Jacoby, Parkes, Skaggs, Saxton and Sorota (7)

NO: (0)

**Gaslight Village Artisan Market APPROVED**

**B. Gaslight Tree Lighting Ceremony** - Melville presented this request. Same as in years past, always the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Fisher: Before COVID the High School Chior sang carols during the event. They are extremely busy and are very good! Who is taking the lead of the Tree Lighting?

Melville: Kate Bylsma

MOTION to approve: Parkes

SUPPORT: Arendshorst

YES: Arendshorst, Fisher, Jacoby, Parkes, Skaggs, Saxton and Sorota (7)

NO: (0)

**Gaslight Tree Lighting Ceremony APPROVED**

**East Grand Rapids Aquatics- Waves Agreement Renewal:**

Melville explained that Waves uses the High School and Wealthy Pool. This contract renews every 3 years and there have been no revisions since the contract was established. EGR City Attorney John Huff said the contract can auto-renew. Melville is requesting the Parks and Recreation Commission consider removing the end date of the contract and letting it automatically renew.

Fisher: The history of the Waves program is phenomenal in this community. Great part of the success of the EGR athletes, great outlet!

Parkes: No substantive changes this year versus other years?

Melville: Other than removal of the end-date of the agreement to auto-renew.

Sorota: This change is automatically renewing every year, instead of the current, renewal every three years.

Melville: Unless the City or Waves requests changes, that is correct.

Skaggs: How does the contract affect the cost?

Melville: Part of the agreement states that every year we update Waves of the increase cost for the year. These increases are part of the city budget process.

Sorota: "Do it."

**East Pride Lacrosse Agreement Amendment:**

Melville stated that East Price Lacrosse has been here since 2015 and at that time the contract was for boys' lacrosse only, not for females at that time. East Pride believes that they are now established and ready to add the girl's lacrosse players. Staff are supportive of this change because of the success, the level of coaching and "vertical integration" throughout time in the program. The only change besides eventually changing dates, is adding girls under their umbrella.

Fisher: Will this be an advantage to Parks and Recreation? Will it take away extra work? Will it free up fields? How does the scheduling of fields work?

Melville: It will not really free up fields but does free up administrative staff. There is a Priority Use Policy, as part of the Joint Facilities agreement with the schools. Schools get to set their times first, then Parks and Recreation get to reserve space. Rentals and the community can get any remaining fields that are open. Multi-use fields are made on as much greenspace as possible.

Fisher: I just want to make sure coordination of fields still happens. Lacrosse, track, and Cross Country can't share the same space, at the same time.

Melville: We assign times and fields to East Pride; they use as they see fit.

**Manhattan Park Improvement Process:**

Director Melville presented to the Commission the history of this process and the outcome of the second survey. There were 456 online survey responses. There were about 70 attendees at the Public Engagement sessions. The community is split 50/50 on a splashpad. Planning to bring more information to the September Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

Skaggs: Timeline?

Melville: If we stay on track, the intent is to have final designs by late fall for potential 2024 construction, depending on the bidding process.

Skaggs: Are we looking for feedback on layout or the process right now?

Melville: More conversations need to be and get community input analyzed, that opportunity will come, hopefully the next meeting.

Saxton: Acknowledged the letter from Mr. Meyer, "I did read your letter" regarding pickleball noise. Is there a noise ordinance that we need to look at?

Melville: Nothing has been finalized yet, the City Commission will review and would need to vote on any changes. Pickleball is currently being played there and hoping to make this a part of the plans with addition of berms or plantings. Pickleball is also played at all facilities that are lined for pickleball, Having the courts moved has also been proposed.

Charles: No specific prohibitions in regards for pickleball. Once we determine elements then we will drill down with consultations and budget. The City Commission is taking considerations.

Fisher: Welcomes the idea of the splash pad being moved to Waterfront Park due to neighbor concerns.

**Parks Improvement Project Updates:**

Director Melville was able to attend a playground meeting that was held during recess. Meeting attendees were able to see the children playing on the new structures on both Breton Downs and Wealthy, they are also waiting on the delivery of the pavilions, when they arrive, they will be installed. Lakeside School is looking to “flip” the site to finish the other part of the playground.

Fred Bunn Multi-use Trails construction started two weeks ago; the outer loop has been started; the company is making good progress. Parts of the trails will be open while other parts of the trails are being worked on, the company likes to see how the trails hold up to use. Looking at completion in October. QR codes are posted around the trails, it brings people to a FAQ page on the city site. Invasive species have been removed, which highlights the nice trees in the woods. The trees that need to be taken down are being used for erosion control.

Quite a bit of clay has been found and this gets mixed with sand from the trails. Wetland areas will have crushed stone, where needed. Approximately 98% of the trails are native materials.

Arendshorst: How do we prevent invasive species?

Melville: Continue to take it out, light encourages growth of invasive species. The way the trail is being built will help as well.

Man-5 drainage system is done. Added 12 inches of sand/topsoil special blend to help support drainage. Irrigation will be installed. Seeding will happen after Labor Day.

**Report of Director:**

Director Melville reported: Parks and Recreation is fully into fall sports. It’s fun to see excitement of the athletes. Youth football got new jerseys this year. Working on winter programing. Kudos to the Parks and Recreation team for continually making improvements and increasing numbers of participants in our programs.

Next Meeting September 25, 2023

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 pm