



Board of Park Commissioners

335 South Broadway
De Pere, WI 54115
<https://www.deperewi.gov/>

Regular Meeting

Final Minutes

Thursday, September 21, 2023

6:30 PM

Council Chambers and Virtual

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Board Member Randy Soquet

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Melissa Thiel Collar	Board Member	Present	
Ryan Jennings	Board Member	Present	
Jim Kneiszel	Board Member	Present	
Amy Chandik Kunding	Aldersperson	Present	
Shana Defnet Ledvina	Aldersperson	Present	
Dean Raasch	Aldersperson	Remote	
Randy Soquet	Board Member	Present	
Connor Mason	Teen Advisor	Present	
Connor Goodman	Teen Advisor	Excused	

Others Present:

Aldersperson Hansen,
Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry,
Don Melichar, Park Superintendent and City Forester,
and Grace Lahtela, Administrative Assistant

II. Public comment upon matters not on the agenda. Comments made during the public comment period shall pertain only to matters under the jurisdiction of the Board of Park Commissioners. Chapter 6-3(f) DPMC

Joe Nicks provided an invitation to an event that is taking place to commemorate the 160th Anniversary of the Gettysburg Address and the plaque at Wilson Park. The event will be held at Wilson Park on October 8th, at 2:00 pm and everyone is invited.

III. Action Items

1. Consideration and Possible Action to Approve the Board of Park Commissioners Minutes from the August 17, 2023 Meeting.

Aldersperson Defnet Ledvina moved to approve the minutes from the August 17, 2023 Board of Park Commissioners minutes, seconded by Melissa Thiel Collar. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Shana Defnet Ledvina, Aldersperson
SECONDER:	Melissa Thiel Collar, Board Member
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Jennings, Kneiszel, Kunding, Defnet Ledvina, Raasch, Soquet, Mason

2. Approval of Donation from Associated Bank for the Nelson Family Pavilion.

Aldersperson Chandik Kunding moved to accept the donation from Associated Bank for \$60,000 toward the Nelson Family Pavilion, seconded by Aldersperson Defnet Ledvina.

Marty Kosobucki verified that the Park Board was aware that the donation is contingent on payments being over a 5-year period and there would be no naming rights to another financial institution.

Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Amy Chandik Kunding, Alderperson
SECONDER:	Shana Defnet Ledvina, Alderperson
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Jennings, Kneiszel, Kunding, Defnet Ledvina, Raasch, Soquet, Mason

IV. Discussion Item

1. Discussion and Review of Petition Submitted by Michael Kostrewa regarding music levels at VFW Pool.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry explained that on the weekend of August 12th and 13th there was a loud music complaint at the VFW pool. The police were contacted by Mr. Kostrewa, regarding the music and the officer requested pool staff to turn the music down. The following Monday morning the problem was addressed. As a temporary fix for the final week of the season, pool staff was instructed to keep the music turned down during the day and off during the evening hours. Marty stated that Trista Groth, the City Sanitarian, was contacted to test the noise level coming from the pool. From these tests, it was determined that the noise level did not exceed city limits. However, from outside the pool fence, the music could not be heard, but on Reid Street the music could be clearly heard, but again it did not exceed the noise limits. Chelsea Moberg, Recreation Supervisor, also reached out to UWGB Professors for their expertise. The comments received were that there is some type of reverberation happening at the facility. Staff feels that music is a very important part of the facility and if the issue cannot be resolved with the location and direction of the speakers, then further consultation is needed. Mr. Kostrewa was not present at the meeting for comments.

Alderperson Chandik Kunding moved to open the meeting to public comments at 6:42 pm, seconded by Ryan Jennings. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Joe Nicks commented that in 2015 when the city updated the noise ordinance, the levels were set so high that they are almost unenforceable. Because of complaints, in March of 2022 the city hired a noise consultant, and the report was presented to finance in August and October of 2022. In April 2023 the topic was sent to council, and it was referred back to staff. To date the topic has not been brought back to council. Mr. Nicks feels that there needs to be a workable noise ordinance in effect that will work for all residents, and the consultant that did the previous noise study should be contacted. Alderperson Raasch commented that he disagreed with some of Mr. Nick's comments about the updated noise ordinance.

James Kneiszel moved to return to regular order at 6:50 pm, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

James Kneiszel questioned if anything changed with the volume of the music and if there were any other complaints received during the season. Marty Kosobucki explained that

he is not aware of any changes in the volume. The amplifier system has a line on it and staff is aware that the music is not to be turned above the line. Marty also commented that Mr. Kostrewa said that he has made many complaints. Neither Marty nor Chelsea have received any complaints but cannot say if the pool managers have received any. However, the pool managers do a very good job at relaying complaints and concerns to the Recreation Supervisor.

Ryan Jennings stated he thinks it would be a good idea to start by looking at the direction and location of the speakers.

Randy Soquet commented staff should investigate the problem and bring it back to park board if complaints are received next year.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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2. Discussion regarding removal of Community Garden at Lions Trailside Park due to condition.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry stated that this item was requested to be placed on the agenda by Alderperson Hansen, because he received a couple of complaints regarding the condition of the community garden and the surrounding areas.

Melissa Thiel Collar moved to open the meeting to public comment at 6:55 pm, seconded by Alderperson Chandik Kundinger. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Marty Kosobucki stated that Alderperson Hansen supplied some photos of the condition of the gardens, and these photos are those that were given to the park board members tonight.

Bob Wildgrube, Secretary of the Killarny Trail Condo Association, spoke representing the association. Mr. Wildgrube stated that the park and community garden are not up to the standards of other parks, and adequate park maintenance is not done. When the community garden was to be placed at Lions Trailside Park, the condo association was not contacted or made aware of this. With the garden located at the park, there are very few people that use the park now. Local property owners are concerned that the garden will have a negative effect on the value of the homes. There are weeds flourishing in the garden and many of the plots are abandoned. The condo association would like the park maintained, filled with playground equipment and picnic tables, and for the garden to be moved to a different location so the park can be used as a park, not a garden.

Rachel Quintas, Brown County Extension Community Garden Coordinator stated she recently received the garden coordinator position. The previous coordinator left in July, so the position was open for the end of the season, which is not the prettiest time for the gardens. Being new to the position, she is not aware of any other complaints, only this one that was received recently. Rachel explained that there was a little less engagement with gardeners in their plots this year, because of the air quality issues; the severe heat warnings as many of the gardeners have health issues; the lack of rain; and the water supply at the park was not filled often enough. There have also been gardeners that have abandoned their plots during the year, so staff plans to provide some educational courses at the beginning of the season for the gardeners. Rachel explained that there is a contract

that is signed by all gardeners that does limit the height of the weeds and what needs to be done by them. Being new to the position, Rachel plans to enforce consequences on the gardeners if they are not following the rules of the contract and implement forfeiture notices for those breaking the rules because there is a long waiting list. Rachel explained that community gardens help with food insecurities and many gardeners donate produce to food pantries. 70% of the gardeners are low to moderate income and the gardens allow individuals to grow culturally appropriate produce. The community gardens are produce gardens, so they do not have large, beautiful flowers, however staff is looking into ways to make the garden look more appealing to surrounding residents.

Ryan Jennings questioned if the wait list is specifically for the Lions Trailside Garden. Rachel was not certain if Lions Trailside had any people on the wait list specifically requesting the park, but some would be able to travel to the location.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina questioned how long the garden has been at Lions Trailside Park. Marty Kosobucki stated that it has been there for 4 years.

Randy Soquet questioned the number of people gardening at Lions Trailside Park and what is the nearest location to Lions Park. Rachel explained that she thought the number of plots was around 25 and the Lions Trailside location is the only location in De Pere.

Wayne Endries, President of the Killarny Trail Condo Association stated that he is behind the gardens, however, the association feels the garden is in the wrong location. The garden does not belong in the middle of a park. Parks should be used for kids running around and for picnics. The weeds in the gardens are getting higher every year. The gardeners do get a lot of produce and enjoyment out of gardening. Home values decreasing because of the garden is a concern. The association would like to see the park used as it should be, and a garden in the middle of the park is not the answer.

Kristina Renier stated she has been gardening since 2015 and the great thing about community gardens is that they are organic, and no chemicals are used. Kristina stated that the park's mission statement includes cultivating communities, providing recreation, and nourishing neighborhoods, which community gardens do. She stated that studies show that community gardens increase property values and reduce crime in the area. They allow parents to show kids how to grow their own food and allow people who cannot afford the high grocery store prices the ability to grow their own organic produce. Kristina is for keeping the garden at Lions Trailside Park.

Mike Stumpf, representing the De Pere Lions Club stated their last meeting was on Thursday of the previous week, and they found out about the complaints on Friday. Due to timing, the Lions Club has not had the opportunity to discuss this issue. Mike explained that the community gardens represent the De Pere Lions Club mission to address hunger and diabetes in the area. The Lions Club has a significant investment in the park, and he hopes that they can be part of the decision-making process regarding the community garden.

Jessica Burdsall stated that she gardens at Lion's Trailside with her mother-in-law, who lives by herself. The garden gives her a reason to get out of the house and socialize with people. This community garden plot helped her mother-in-law out so much, they decided to get an additional plot. These two garden plots allowed them to spend the entire

summer in the garden together as a family, and share food with pantries, co-workers, neighbors, and friends. This time and conversation that the community garden provides cannot be replaced.

John Nehring wants the city to keep the garden at Lions Trailside Park so their family can continue canning, which allows them to eat fresh vegetables throughout the year.

Lori Sadewaner stated she is not a gardener but is married to one. She feels that there are different opinions on what a park should look like between individuals. Gardeners are very protective of their plots because of the hard work they put into them to make the soil better each year. She commented that the weeds in the empty lots near the condos are far higher than the weeds in the garden, and these weeds cause a problem for the gardeners.

Kristi Kerscher stated her kids love the garden. Her family lives in an apartment, so the garden is a way for her kids to run, play in the sand, as well as provide fresh produce for the family. The gardens have been a wonderful process for her family and provide a great education, not only for the kids but the gardeners learn from each other too. When the Brown County Extension received the complaint, they immediately sent out an email to the gardeners for suggestions. The gardeners found time to do a community garden clean-up for the gardeners that did not keep up their plots and couldn't get out there. The gardeners will do anything for each other and anything to keep the garden.

Eben Erhard, member of the De Pere Beautification Committee, and a volunteer coordinator gardener for the NEW Master Gardeners. Eben stated that if you look up the definition of a municipal park, it is to provide recreation to citizens, and this is what Lions Trailside Park, and the garden does. Eben has been gardening at Lions Trailside Park since the beginning and has donated over 200 pounds of food every year to pantries, senior citizen residences, and touring musicians. All gardens have weeds, but there are also invasive species located in the park property. The gardeners are passionate about keeping the garden where it is. At the beginning, the soil was not great and did not drain properly. There has been organic matter and a lot of time put into the gardens to help with the soil conditions. Gardens cannot be simply moved to a different location. Everyone has neighbors or things that we do not like. Think about living next to Legion Park, with the pool, ball diamond, the Pink Flamingo tournament, disc golf, and the annoying sound of pickleball. Eben asked the park board to side with the many and keep the park and the garden where it is. Eben provided a letter to the park board from Amy Murphy, De Pere Christian Outreach Food Pantry in support of the garden.

Cheryl Williams, member of Friends of Community Gardens, stated community gardens have lost some of their federal funding so a group got together to start Friends of Community Gardens. This group is working on securing long-term endowments and developing alternative funding for community gardens. The Green Bay Community Foundation controls the funding for the program, which has secured a levy from Brown County and many great donations. Studies have been done, which show that the gardens tend to support low income and immigrant populations and are also considered the best integrated public place. The study also provided proof that areas around community gardens show reduced crime, and many people choose to live near community gardens.

Ryan Jennings moved to close the meeting at 8:00 pm, seconded by Melissa Thiel Collar. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

James Kneiszel stated that he appreciates the turnout for the meeting tonight. Prior to the meeting he went out to Lions Trailside Park to view the garden and it looks like a garden. There were a couple of plots that appeared to be out of control, but one thing he noticed was a sign next to a garden plot that invited people to try their tomatoes. The park property is for public use, not condo property, and the garden takes up a small percentage of the property. The community gardens provide a really nice service to the community and if there is a waiting list to get a garden plot, maybe the city could do more.

Ryan Jennings stated he works in the health and fitness field. Ryan suggested expanding the garden to allow for a flowers border and for additional plots.

Aldersperson Defnet Ledvina agreed that this could be a learning opportunity for the neighbors about the garden. Aldersperson Ledvina stated she had no idea how popular the garden is and would love to see the park system expand on this. There are a lot of existing parks that have a lot of green space that could be used.

Aldersperson Chandik Kunding also agreed with everyone and stated that sometimes negative comments can spur positive outcomes. She appreciated everyone hearing each other out and it was inspiring to hear both the concerns and the support.

Conner Mason, Teen Advisor, stated that at 14 it is hard to relate to all the citizens here, but it was interesting to see how community oriented the gardeners are. The comments shed light on how the community gardens are a good thing. Conner does agree that some maintenance needs to be done and this would provide a great opportunity for the community to have new experiences with diverse individuals.

Melissa Thiel Collar stated she grew up around gardening and understands the problem with weeds but is also aware of the food insecurities for kids that do not get fresh produce. She understands the concerns of the condo association, however with the circumstances this year there is a reason for the lack of upkeep. Melissa feels that the garden should be observed closer next year to see if the problems still exist.

Randy Soquet thanked all the people who devoted time tonight to come to the meeting and the ability to be open with each other with differing opinions. Randy also stated that he is looking forward to working with Rachel Quintas with the Brown County Extension office and what changes will be made to make things better in 2024.

Marty Kosobucki stated that the item was just for discussion, so no action can be taken at this time. If the park board would like an action item on the community garden it will need to be on a future agenda.

Aldersperson Chandik Kunding requested an annual update of the community garden in 2024.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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3. Continued Discussion on ordinance related to dogs in De Pere Parks.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry stated that overall, the information received in the survey for the COMP plan leans toward allowing dogs in the

parks in some capacity. If the Park Board is interested in changing the ordinance, staff will work with the legal office to revise the current ordinance.

Randy Soquet stated he would like to see an update to the ordinance to allow dogs in parks.

James Kneiszel commented that in the survey, there was a lot of reference to dog poop in the parks and wondered if there is a large problem with this currently. Don Melichar, Park Superintendent and City Forester stated that there are not a lot of problems, but staff does encounter areas where people allow their dogs to run freely throughout the park. Optimist Park is the worst of all the parks.

Melissa Thiel Collar commented that the city attorney should be asked about the city liability and what the enforcement and repercussions are going to be for offenders. Marty Kosobucki stated that currently there is a citation that can be issued to individuals not following the ordinance, however this isn't used very often.

Randy Soquet moved to open the meeting to public comments at 8:21 pm, seconded by James Kneiszel. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mike Stumpf stated he was part of the group that did the fundraising for the dog park. As a former dog owner, he is in favor of allowing dogs in parks, however, he does feel that dog owners need to be held responsible for their pets. If a pet owner is found violating the ordinance, he feels that the fines should be substantial.

James Kneiszel moved to close the meeting to public comment at 8:23 pm, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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V. Staff Updates

1. Staff Update on Playground Installations at Kelly Danen, Legion and Lawton Parks.

Marty Kosobucki gave an update on the three new playgrounds. The playground at Kelly Danen has been installed and waiting on the poured in place surfacing to be installed. The poured in place contracts have been approved, staff is just waiting for them to be returned. Legion Park playground is scheduled to be installed on Monday, September 25th, with the poured in place surfacing to be scheduled once the contracts are returned. Lawton Playground is scheduled to be installed on Wednesday, September 27th. This playground will be getting wood chips, so these will be placed once the playground is installed.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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2. Staff Update on Nelson Family Pavilion Ground Breaking.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry stated that the groundbreaking ceremony for the Nelson Family Pavilion is scheduled for Friday, September 29th at 10:30 am. The weather is supposed to be 74 degrees and sunny.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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3. Staff Update on repair of Southwest Park Shelter.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry stated that staff met with the consultant today, and they are wrapping up the scope and specifications for the project. Staff will contact the insurance company tomorrow to get confirmation of the project. Once confirmation from the insurance company is received then staff can get the project proposals out.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

4. Staff Update on Comprehensive Plan Status.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry stated that the draft plan of the Comprehensive Outdoor Plan was submitted to staff this evening. Staff plans to bring the draft copy of the COMP plan to the October meeting.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

5. Staff Update on Major Projects.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry explained that the attached report is an update of the park projects that have been completed, along with the ones that are still being worked on.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

VI. Future Agenda Items

Connor Mason, Teen Advisor question the chart on page 28 of the survey for the COMP Plan. In the survey, there was slight interest in a skate park or BMX track, which was the least picked option. Connor questioned if there is a way to see what the demographics of the survey are. There are not a lot of amenities for teens to do at the parks, other than the sport fields, and feels that a skate park or BMX track would be a great addition to city parks.

Alderperson Chandik Kundingner questioned what can be done to get the younger demographics interested in completing the survey and providing input.

VII. Adjournment

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 pm, seconded by James Kneiszel. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Grace Lahtela