



Board of Park Commissioners

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

Regular Meeting

Final Minutes

Thursday, September 19, 2024

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	
Mike Eserkaln	Aldersperson	Present	
Jim Kneiszel	Board Member	Present	
Amy Chandik Kunding	Aldersperson	Excused	
Shana Defnet Ledvina	Aldersperson	Present	
Randy Soquet	Board Member	Present	
Connor Mason	Teen Advisor	Present	
James Lyga	Teen Adviser	Present	

Others present:

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry

Brian Christnovich, Park Superintendent

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. Section 6-3(f) DPMC

None

III. Items

1. Consideration and Possible Action to Approve the Board of Park Commissioners Minutes from the July 18, 2024 meeting.

Aldersperson Defnet Ledvina moved to approve the Board of Park Commissioners minutes from the July 18, 2024 meeting, seconded by James Kneiszel. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Shana Defnet Ledvina, Aldersperson
SECONDER:	Jim Kneiszel, Board Member
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Eserkaln, Kneiszel, Defnet Ledvina, Soquet
EXCUSED:	Amy Chandik Kunding

2. Consideration & Possible Action to Approve Donation from Aurora BayCare

Melissa Thiel Collar moved to accept the donation of T-shirts for the flag football program from Aurora BayCare, seconded by Aldersperson Eserkaln. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Melissa Thiel Collar, Board Member
SECONDER:	Mike Eserkaln, Alderperson
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Eserkaln, Kneiszel, Defnet Ledvina, Soquet
EXCUSED:	Amy Chandik Kundering

3. Consideration and Possible on to Approve Eagle Scout Project Request to Install Wood Duck and Swallow Homes along the Preserve Trail from Clement Markowski.

James Kneiszel moved to approve the Eagle Scout Project to install wood duck and swallow homes along the Preserve Trail by Clement Markowski, seconded by Randy Soquet.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry stated that Clement Markowski is at the meeting tonight if anyone should have any questions for him.

James Kneiszel moved to open the meeting to public comments at 6:35 pm, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Eagle Scout Clement Markowski stated that his intention is to build and install 10 wood duck and 10 swallow homes to be put at the Preserve Trail and the dog park. The homes will be built by other scouts in his troop and volunteers and will be ready for installation in the spring. The homes will have slanted roofs and be made of cedar, which is naturally water resistant and water protectant.

James Kneiszel thanked Clement for thinking of and doing this project. He stated that he used to make bluebird houses and explained the benefit of installing companion houses and if Clement had any questions that he could reach out to him.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina questioned how he was planning to pay for the materials for the project. Clement Markowski stated he was going to see if the city would fund some of the project and if that was not a possibility then he would be doing fundraising. Alderperson Defnet Ledvina commented that usually the city does not fund the projects, but there is a Community Grant Program where applications are taken every December and June. If approved the project could receive funding up to \$600 and encouraged him to apply for the Community Service Grant.

James Lyga, Teen Advisor, questioned if there would be any consideration to building some houses for an East De Pere location. Clement Markowski explained that it could possibly be a future Eagle Scout project for the troop.

Randy Soquet thanked Clement Markowski for considering the project and encouraged him to apply for the Community Service Grant to help fund the project.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina moved to close the meeting at 6:40 pm, seconded by James Kneiszel. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Upon vote, the above motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Jim Kneiszel, Board Member
SECONDER:	Randy Soquet, Board Member
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Eserkaln, Kneiszel, Defnet Ledvina, Soquet
EXCUSED:	Amy Chandik Kunding

4. Consideration/Possible Action to Approve \$5,000 Grant from Dickhut Family Charitable Endowment Fund for Chairs/End Tables in Upper-Level Foyer, Oak & Hickory Rms. at Community Center*

Randy Soquet moved to approve a \$5,000 grant from the Dickhut Family Charitable Endowment Fund for chairs and end tables in the upper-level foyer, Oak and Hickory rooms at the Community Center, seconded by Melissa Thiel Collar. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Randy Soquet, Board Member
SECONDER:	Melissa Thiel Collar, Board Member
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Eserkaln, Kneiszel, Defnet Ledvina, Soquet
EXCUSED:	Amy Chandik Kunding

5. Approval of Change Order 8 for Nelson Family Pavilion

Randy Soquet moved to approve change order #8 for the Nelson Family Pavilion, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Randy Soquet, Board Member
SECONDER:	Shana Defnet Ledvina, Alderperson
AYES:	Thiel Collar, Eserkaln, Kneiszel, Defnet Ledvina, Soquet
EXCUSED:	Amy Chandik Kunding

6. Review and Consideration of Future Planning for De Pere Ice Arena.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry explained that at the last meeting, the Park Board requested staff to do research on various topics of the Ice Center. It was requested that staff look at other rinks to see how they are run; to provide information on the implemented surcharges; and get a breakdown of the users in each of the user groups. From this research it was learned that there are 98 rinks in the State of Wisconsin, which are ran in a wide variety of ways. With the city ran facilities, the municipalities are substantially larger, are county ran rinks, and several of them are ran by non-profits. The resident vs. non-resident breakdown for user groups was obtained, with the ratio of residents not being as high as we hoped. The surcharge started in 2019 to offset costs to repair the chiller system. This expense has now been paid off and now all surcharges will be going into the Ice Arena Fund. The surcharge will also be increasing to \$35 per hour this next season. Along with the implementation of the surcharge, per the agreement with Brown County Ice Management, 50% of the net profits of running the rink are returned to the city and deposited into the Ice Arena Fund for upkeep and capital improvement project at the arena. There has been staff discussions and the first decision that needs to be made is if the Park Board feels the city should promote winter activities and an indoor Ice Arena, and then if the city wants to be in the Ice Arena business.

James Kneiszel thanked Marty for providing the participation breakdown for the user groups. Reviewing the information provided, there are 90 participants throughout all groups that are City of De Pere residents and probably more than one participant from each family, leading to a small number of families benefiting and being impacted by the facility. Mr. Kneiszel feels that the city should explore finding a user group that has a long-term interest that would take over the building or offer it to the County. There are so many updates that are needed to the building Mr. Kneiszel does not think that the City should be in the Ice Arena business.

Melissa Thiel Collar questioned what would need to be done with the agreement with Brown County Ice Management. Marty Kosobucki explained that currently we are under a one-year extension with Ice Management that will expire in the spring. The city is in a good position with timing if we want to go in a different direction.

Randy Soquet questioned the number of open skate hours available for residents. Marty Kosobucki stated that he believes there is one open skate session a weekend.

Melissa Thiel Collar commented that there is no staff recommendation and questioned if there was any recommendation staff could offer. Marty Kosobucki explained that from a leisure perspective staff feels that the Ice Arena adds a tremendous value to the community and would be sad to see it go and would not recommend it going. How the facility is operated is a different discussion and cannot make a recommendation how it is operated. With the financial value to our area, Marty does not think the facility should go away.

Randy Soquet questioned if the comprehensive study that was performed stated anything related to winter activities and the Ice Arena. Marty Kosobucki stated he was not sure if anything was specifically asked regarding the Ice Arena. Mr. Soquet questioned the open skate numbers, which might provide some direction on what the community would want.

Aldersperson Defnet Ledvina stated that on the website it states that open skating is offered once a month for 5 months.

James Kneiszel stated that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the individuals using the facility are from outside of the city and feels it is not financially responsible to have the City of De Pere taxpayers finance the facility for outside residents. Ideally this situation should be for the County.

Aldersperson Defnet Ledvina commented that as a council member she agrees with Mr. Kneiszel. She feels that the facility is important to the community, but it should not be the city's financial burden to bear and subsidize.

Melissa Thiel Collar states she understands that the parents want their kids to play hockey, but the city cannot keep footing the bill and it is not fair for the kids to be playing in a facility with all the safety and ADA compliance issues of the building. She hopes that City Council will partner with another organization to keep the facility open and improve the condition of the facility.

Marty Kosobucki commented that the City does not subsidize the Ice Arena on a yearly basis for operations. The city's financial involvement has been in capital projects, not in operations.

James Kneiszel stated he understands that the operating costs are not subsidized and was surprised at the condition of the facility. The building needs a lot of work for the facility to operate for years to come. He does however think that the Ice Arena is valuable and likes having it there.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina commented that all Park Board members have toured the facility to see the conditions.

Randy Soquet commented that staff is requesting the Park Board to recommend to City Council to either support the Ice Arena or recommend that the city should not be in the Ice Arena business and research options for the facility.

James Kneiszel moved to open the meeting to public comment at 7:00 pm, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Dena Sands commented that she appreciated the Park Board looking into the user groups. She is not a City of De Pere resident and comes into the city on a regular basis and spends money in the city. She clarified that there are additional open skate hours that are listed online with the different user groups offering open skate opportunities for the residents. Ms. Sands stated that the recommendation provided will have a significant impact on the different user groups and the high school hockey team.

Mike Thompson stated he is a De Pere resident and a De Pere taxpayer. He has two children and utilizes a lot of the city recreation programs. All these recreation programs have users that are not within the City of De Pere. Also, the fields and courts that are located within the city and are used by non-residents. Mr. Thompson stated that the new rink being installed at Cornerstone would only be able to support 30% of the ice time users of the De Pere Ice Arena and if the rink is closed it would take out both the youth and high school programs. Currently there are no tax dollars going into the maintenance of the facility and over the past 30 years the facility has not been appropriately maintained. If a non-profit or a for profit organization was to take over the facility and invest money for repairs, they will significantly increase the ice time fees to support the facility, and many families will not be able to afford these increased costs. Mr. Thompson feels the city should make the investment needed into the building.

Willie Birkholz represents the De Pere Voyageurs High School Hockey programs stated he has been within the hockey programs for 16 years. During this time, he has seen the facility age over the years with the different management groups. This facility is the home sheet of ice for both the Voyageurs and the High School hockey organizations. The locker rooms, pm the east side of the building are maintained by the High School Booster Club and the De Pere Deacons and offer an elite locker room space for the State of Wisconsin and with the right management group and contribution from the user groups, this can be an awesome space for the kids to skate. Mr. Birkholz hopes the City of De Pere will find a way to keep the facility running.

Melissa Hongisto clarified that the different user groups offer open skate to the residents. Prior to the Packers and Howard outdoor ice rinks opening for the season, there can be 200 kids at an open skate session. This number falls to 100 after the outdoor rinks open. The building is old, but it is paid for, and the user groups subsidize the facility. As a

taxpayer, she is fine with paying to subsidize the facility and feels it is unique to have only one of 90 rinks in the state. This low number of rinks shows why it is important to keep and why the large number of non-resident users. If the Park Board was to tour the facility when the kids are in there skating, it has a totally different atmosphere. Ms. Hongisto requested that the Park Board find a way to keep the rink open, the user groups are very motivated to do what they can to keep the facility open.

David Lepp from the De Pere Deacons Hockey Team stated that the property was donated to the city. The city ran the facility until 1998 and then contracted out with a management company to run the rink. There was no money to fix the problems with the rink back then and there is still no money allocated to fix the rink. Mr. Lepp feels that if the city can come up with \$900,000 to run a pool for 2 ½ months out of the year it can come up with the funds to run the ice arena for 6 months out of the year. Mr. Lepp also stated that there are non-residents that use the pool, the same as the ice arena. Alderperson Defnet Ledvina clarified that the \$900,000 in funds to operate the pool comes from a referendum that was voted in by city residents to support the funding for the pools, and that non-residents pay a large fee to use the pools.

Dena Sands commented that if improvements were done to the facility, it could run year-round, which is needed.

Randy Soquet commented that no members of the Park Board think the Ice Arena should be shut down, or that there is no value to the ice center, but a solution on how to move forward needs to be obtained.

Mike Thompson feels the solution need to protect the user groups for years to come, with the possibility of the user groups forming a sub-committee to work with the city in running the facility.

Marty Kosobucki stated that this topic quickly becomes a very complicated discussion until there is some direction from Council. The Park Board needs to recommend to council if the rink should stay, and if so, what is the best direction to go.

Connor Mason, Teen Advisor, feels that the Park Board recommendation should be for the Ice Arena to stay. He has friends that use the facility, and it provides jobs for the area kids. He feels it should be made clear to council that the facility should stay and be made a staple of the City of De Pere that is well maintained and elite.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina moved to close the meeting to public comment at 7:32 pm, seconded by Randy Soquet. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

James Kneiszel clarified that he would like to see the Ice Arena stay but would like to remove the burden of the facility from the city. He is not sure if it is practical to repair the facility, rather than start over. He appreciates the support of the user groups and doing all the work, but with hundreds of thousands of dollars in repairs needed, the user groups are not fully funding the facility. He feels a resolution would be to send the recommendation to council to reduce or eliminate the burden of the building itself, and to meet with Brown County to see if they are willing to operate the facility and secondarily go to the user groups to see how this could be done. Based on the percentage of users from the city, the running of the facility needs to be done a different way. Also, when

comparing the Ice Arena to the pools, pools are need as they teach lifesaving skills to children, because the schools do not have them.

Melissa Thiel Collar stated she respects all the comments, but feels it is not the Park Board's responsibility to tell council what to do, but council needs to tell the Park Board what should be done. It is not a value judgement on what is more important, the pools, ice arena, or baseball.

James Kneiszel question what Marty would like from the Park Board. Marty Kosobucki stated that what the Park Board needs to determine is if they feel the Ice Arena should continue and if it has value to the city. No financial decisions need to be made; Council will determine the financial side.

Melissa Thiel Collar made a motion for the Ice Arena to continue in operation and the Park Board requests City Council to determine how it operates, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina.

James Kneiszel questioned the motion that if there were no other options that we would like the facility to continue. Alderperson Defnet Ledvina stated it will be up to council if they want it to continue.

Upon vote, the motion passed 4-1 with James Kneiszel voting nay.

RESULT:	ADOPTED [4 TO 1]
MOVER:	Melissa Thiel Collar, Board Member
SECONDER:	Shana Defnet Ledvina, Alderperson
AYES:	Melissa Thiel Collar, Mike Eserkaln, Shana Defnet Ledvina, Randy Soquet
NAYS:	Jim Kneiszel
EXCUSED:	Amy Chandik Kunding

IV. Discussion Items

1. Review and Discussion on Proposed 2025 Budget for Parks, Recreation and Forestry

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry pointed out a couple of things regarding the budget. First, with regards to the timing of the budget, normally the budget would be prepared, and it would be brought to Park Board for review prior to meeting with the mayor. Due to the timing of budget preparations this year, the meeting with the mayor has already occurred, but he is still in the process of developing the final budget. There are some big increases in operating, but most of them are relative to the addition of the Forestry Supervisor. Also, under capital there are asterisks next to some projects which indicates that they are likely not to be included in the 2025 budget. There are also projects that do not currently show an asterisk but might still be eliminated. If there are any suggestions or recommendations on the proposed budget, these can still be shared with the mayor. On October 9th the draft budget will be presented to council at the budget workshop session.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina questioned the removal of the Waterview Heights Park. Marty Kosobucki explained that the subdivision is building up rapidly and there are roads on both sides of the park. There was \$30,000 in the prior budget for utilities and sidewalk and these additional funds would be to develop the park.

Melissa Thiel Collar moved to open the meeting to public comment at 7:47 pm, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Joe Nicks gave a summary of the events pertaining to the Wilson Park improvements project. In 2023 there was \$50,000 in the budget for design of Wilson Park, which has been completed. In early October of 2023 there was an event held at Wilson Park where the mayor spoke favorably on funding the Wilson Park improvements in the near future. The 2024 budget did not include any funding for Wilson Park improvements even though the project was listed as a high priority of non-maintenance projects. In the 2025 Capital Improvement Project list, Wilson Park improvements was again listed as the highest priority non-maintenance project. Currently the draft budget shows the only way it will receive funding is through grants or donations and seven items of lower priority are approved for funding in 2025. There have been no improvements done to Wilson Park in over 60 years. Mr. Nicks requests that the Park Board recommends that council follows the recommendations of the COMP Plan, the Capital Improvement Plan and the direction of the Parks Director and to get the Wilson Park Project funded in 2025. Marty Kosobucki stated that the project is still in the 2025 budget but will not be funded unless grants and donations are received. It was not removed indefinitely.

James Anderson stated that Wilson Park is in a residential neighbor, next to the college and close to downtown and a senior citizen living complex. There is already a plan developed for the improvements and provides an opportunity for a nice green space on the west side of De Pere, comparable to the Mike Walsh Plaza. Mr. Anderson feels this project will only happen with the support of the Park Board.

Melissa Thiel Collar moved to close the meeting to public comment at 8:03 pm, seconded by Alderperson Defnet Ledvina. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Melissa Thiel Collar questioned if there has been any discussion about the houses that are being sold off by St. Norbert College near the park. Marty Kosobucki stated he has not heard any comments.

James Kneiszel commented that anything at Wilson Park is twice as old as the equipment at Rainbow Park and with St. Norbert College selling off the houses in the neighborhood around the park, many new families are moving into the neighborhood. Mr. Kneiszel would like to see Wilson Park included in the 2025 budget.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina stated she would like to see the Wilson Park project included in the 2025 budget. All the events of the city are happening on the east side and there needs to be something exciting on the west side to get the people over there.

Marty Kosobucki stated that about 1/3 of all capital projects get redlined. Wilson Park is a fabulous and needed project. Wilson Park has not received attention in many years and it would be nice to develop it into a useful park.

James Kneiszel requested Alderperson Defnet Ledvina to suggest that the Wilson Park project replace the Rainbow Park improvements. Alderperson Defnet Ledvina stated that the equipment at Rainbow Park really needs to be replaced too.

Marty Kosobucki reiterated that there is a great plan developed that would get a great deal of use. He will relay to the mayor that the Park Board is very committed to the project and will relay this information during the budget workshop, but ultimately the council members need to fight for the project if it to be completed.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina questioned if there are any other items that got eliminated that staff is nervous about getting pushed off. Marty Kosobucki stated that the bleachers are Kelly Danen are very old wooden bleachers that continue to splinter and break, and the Optimist Park storm drain ditch.

Marty Kosobucki stated there has been a lot of requests for new pickleball courts, but it is hard to promote more park amenities when we don't get funding for Wilson Park.

Alderperson Defnet Ledvina questioned the need for the AC at the Community Center. Marty Kosobucki explained that there are two compressors for the unit at the Community Center and we are currently running on one. Due to the cost of repairing the unit it was decided it was better off replacing it with a new unit.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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V. Staff Updates

1. Staff Update on Donations

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry explained that the attached list is all donations under \$1,000 that were received by the department.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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2. Staff Update on Naming Sponsor for Nelson Family Pavilion Patio.

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry stated that a large donation has been received for the naming rights of the patio for the Nelson Family Pavilion from the KC and Georgia Stock Foundation for \$100,000. This donation was already approved by Common Council.

RESULT:	DISCUSSED
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VI. Future Agenda Items

Marty Kosobucki, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry stated that October 1st will be the kick-off date for the new dog ordinance in the parks.

VII. Adjournment

James Kneiszel moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 pm, seconded by Melissa Thiel Collar. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Grace Lahtela