



City of Helena

CITY-COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY

Wednesday, March 2, 2016



City Members

- Pat Doyle
- Melissa Lewis
- Ross Johnson

County Members

- Jane Kollmeyer
- Dave Payne
- Lonny Cox (Lincoln Parks Board)

Joint Member

- John Carter, School District Representative

Commission Representatives

- Rob Farris-Olsen, City Commissioner
- Andy Hunthausen, County Commissioner

Staff Contact

- Kevin Hamilton, Deputy Director, Lewis and Clark County Community Development and Planning
- Matt Heimel, Lewis and Clark County Special Districts Planner
- Amy Teegarden, Parks and Recreation Director
- Craig Marr, Parks Superintendent
- Todd Wheeler, Recreation and Aquatics Program Manager
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

LOCATION: City-County Building, Room 426

TIME: 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Visitor(s): Steve Ackerlund, Nancy Everson, Johnny Keintz, Al Knauber, Nate McCarthy, Megan McCumbers, and Brad Petty.

• Call to Order

The City-County Parks Board Meeting was called to order at 11:35.

• Establish Quorum/Review Agenda/Introductions

Chairperson, Melissa Lewis established a quorum. In reviewing the agenda, Ross recommended we add Steve Ackerlund, representing the Helena Regional Sports Association (indoor recreation proposal), as an item to the agenda. Melissa said we will add Mr. Ackerlund under item 5, Presentations: Indoor Recreation Facilities. Due to a tight schedule, Amy recommended that Mr. Ackerlund be the first presentation.

• Consent Action Items

Approval of minutes: February 3, 2016

With no corrections to the minutes, Dave made a motion to approve the February 3, 2016 minutes as presented. Ross seconded. Motion carried.

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- **Comments from Persons Present**

The board will accept brief comments from the public for items that are not on the agenda at this time.

- Megan McCumbers asked to present. She stated that her husband is disabled and has recently taken up the hobby of metal detecting. Her husband contacted city parks and recreation to ask what can be done to allow respectful metal detectors into the parks. Megan said he was informed that while we don't currently have a policy on metal detectors, the parks and recreation department does discourage the use.
- Amy shared we are starting a process of looking at our parks code and asked Craig for further clarification. Craig – most state and national parks have adopted a policy which prohibits metal detecting for a variety of reasons: 1) If someone loses a personal item (such as a wedding ring or something of value), it is likely they won't recover the item, 2) a lot of our city parks are considered historic sites – removing artifacts of persons that own the property.
- Megan said she and her husband have reviewed the federal law. If you find something like a historical artifact, that has to be turned in. She and her husband have no issues with returning those items of value.
- The other concern from a parks and recreation standpoint is potential damage done to the irrigated turf.
- For the sake of time, Amy suggested parks board allows parks and recreation to do a little more work/research on this issue. We will do this under the umbrella of looking at our parks code (set some parameters or policy).

- **Presentations**

Indoor Recreation Facility – Steve Ackerlund

- Steve passed out some background information.
- Steve serves as the Secretary of the newly formed Helena Regional Sports Association. They are a 501c3 organization. They were formed as a vision in wake of Carroll College closing down their pool facility. Helena now has unmet needs in the community in regards to an indoor sporting facility.
- The group consists mostly of parents of young people in sports and sports aficionado. Steve noted that they are actively looking for someone with accounting experience to join their group.
- The dream behind this was a pool complex of tournament quality to bring people to Helena for tournaments. Pools are expensive to operate and a pool on its own would not be sustainable, so the group is looking to make this a multi-sports complex to include: indoor soccer, pickleball, roller derby, dance, basketball, indoor running space, etc. The complex would be available to everyone.
- As a 501c3 organization, they have a range of socio-economic needs that must be met. It is not their desire to compete against for-profit.
- The group is getting inside support and guidance. They received a grant from Big Sky Trust fund in the amount of \$50K (\$25K to come from the grant and an additional \$25K that must be matched – have raised \$10K and do expect to raise the balance).
- The first order of business was to have a feasibility study done. With a portion of the money, they did a RFP and Ballard King and Associates was selected to do the feasibility study.

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- Four steps (three of which will be funded by the grant):
 1. Needs Assessment – looking at what we already have in our community, looking at our demographics, interviewing and talking to key leaders in this area, find out what the needs are and scope out what is really possible given a community of this size and where we are at.
 2. Feasibility Analysis – this is where we would determine how we are going to use the facility and laying out a sustainable management plan. Once we know what we can do, we will phase to the next step.
 3. Concept Plan and Facility Sitting – this is where we will identify three candidate sites to be analyzed through an evaluation matrix. This is where we will get a concept drawing of what the facility could potentially look like. This would be done through an architect that specializes in these types of facilities. From this point, we will need to get additional funds to get through the implementation plan.
 4. Implementation Strategy – finance it, design it, and build it. In the end, someone else would own and manage this facility – city and county would have the opportunity to partner in this.
- Melissa – is this a fairly new effort? Steve stated the committee first met last June and have since met approximately 25 times.
- Dave – when do you anticipate the planning process to be completed? The feasibility study is a 6-month process.
- Amy stated she has been working with group of people that is being spearheaded by the tourism improvement district. They have a tournament committee and Amy feels this project would very much be of interest to them. As we all know, tournaments/ recreational events equals economic development. This will benefit all.
- Steve – one of the things we will get out of the feasibility study is an economic impact assessment. The facility may cost up to \$50 million dollars.
- Amy then stated that the Swish Tournament sponsored by Helena Area Chamber of Commerce is scheduled this weekend (youth basketball). They are utilizing 8 gyms throughout the community. Wouldn't it be nice if this event was held in one facility? Steve agreed and said that there are not a lot of facilities in Montana that offer comfortable quality. This will make the area more attractive to businesses as well.
- Want consultant to help us do this right. The group is in the process of building a website to include an area where people can go out and donate to the project.
- Amy had a question for the parks board to consider – is there a potential need or for the parks board to have a liaison serve on this group? Steve said they meet once a month for a couple hours.
- Melissa – is there someone from the parks board that would like to serve on this committee? We can add this as a standing discussion item. Steve stated they do have meeting agendas and summaries. He would be happy to supply the board with copies of them for review and/or discussion.
- Amy will send her contact information as well as Jennifer's to Steve.
- John – one other comment. As part of the survey that Ballard King and Associates will most likely do, can it be configured to handle some of the survey requirements for land and water conservation grants? We have to update this every 3 years – if we are going to do a recreational facility, maybe we can combine some of the elements. Your consultant should know exactly what is required.

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- Dave stated the fairgrounds are looking at multi-sports complex. Maybe this could be a place to house the facility – he will mention this to the fair board.
- When asked if this was presented to the school district, Steve said they had representatives at a couple meeting; however, they are not actively engaged.
- Dave – the school district does have competitive swim teams, but now they have no place to swim. Steve agreed and added that this new facility would be available to area schools, the guard armory, Carroll College, etc. This facility will meet unmet demands in our community.
- Melissa stated she looks forward to monitoring the progress.

FOLLOW UP ITEM: Amy will make certain Steve gets contact information for her and Jennifer.

Financial Report / Funding Requests

Helena Babe Ruth Association

- Johnny Keintz began the discussion by saying thank you to the board for past support. Over the last 5 years, and with the funding approved by this board, the association has installed fences on the complex, fencing the entire park, replaced 8 backstops, and put in automated sprinklers which has improved grass care. They have a park that everyone can be proud of and one which is safe for kids.
- This year, in working with the road department, they put in 2000 feet of concrete jersey barriers from the fairground entrance all the way around to Custer to the end of the park.
- In addition, this allows us to close off the park during winter (it is still accessible by foot).
- They also installed big safety lights on clubhouse.
- With all of this, the facility has increased operations and maintenance costs. The association is finding harder to subsidize costs through the baseball families. Last year there were 575 kids involved in the program from March to July. From August to October, there were 600 Helena Small Fry Football players. The association has 100 volunteer coaches and 60 local sponsors helping out the program, and now they are working with Legion on a field use agreement to use the fields (Legion will also assist with the upkeep of the fields).
- Father's day tournament – last year had 80 teams participated. Amy mentioned the Swish tournament. There are 960 kids involved in this 2-day tournament and it was estimated the tournament will bring in approximately \$750K to the economy. The father's day tournament is expected to bring in 1.5 million to economy – largest fundraiser in our area.
- Every year Babe Ruth hosts a couple tournaments. With popularity growing in soccer and lacrosse, Babe Ruth is seeing reduced funding which in turn, makes it more difficult to do upkeep on the fields. Today everything is costing more making it more difficult to afford incidentals. The fields experienced a lot of damage from the recent wind storms.
- Nate – registrations are going on right now and they will be holding tryouts in a couple of weeks.
- As the Babe Ruth board, they have two different areas of focus – baseball and the complex. The complex encompasses more than just baseball. It houses football, Carroll College softball, etc.
- Averages \$65K a year between expenses that occur and depreciation to maintain the complex. The money received by the parks board, while very much appreciated, does not

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cover this. They are fundraising or perhaps even having to raise fees for the kids in the program.

- Nate state they come to the board today with specific requests. They put some information on their 5-year balance sheet. They are trying to balance registration fees with fundraising and other funding. Examples / areas of concern include:
 - Mowing contract is \$14,500 for a 7-month period (April – October). The parks board currently pays \$8,000 towards this expense. Babe Ruth is asking to increase to \$14,500. It's about 20 acres of total coverage.
 - They have 2 large storage containers that they are leasing. These containers hold equipment and are very durable. Babe Ruth pays \$300 per month for 2 of these. The current payoff is \$6,850. To the extent that it is available out of capital savings, they would like funds to purchase these out. It would save Babe Ruth \$300 per month.
 - From parks development fund, Babe Ruth is requesting funding as there are trees dying and falling over on fences and dugouts. They have some damaged chain link fence and 2 of the dugout roofs have completely blown off. Have a need to replace the roofing with perhaps a metal roof that is more durable and will hold up to the wind.
 - The newly place jersey barriers will block off the north entrance to the park, and Babe Ruth would like to put in fencing and a gate on other end.
 - To aerate the facility, the cost is approximately \$1,500 per time. It should be done 2 to 3 times per year – haven't been able to do this. Nate stated they can purchase an aerator for \$4,000 and get years of use out of this.
 - The requested items come to a total of \$11,450.00.
- While they realize we don't have that amount of money, Babe Ruth Association requests that to the extent there is allocable money, they would appreciate any funding.
- As an additional request, Nate asked that if there is any additional money from the general fund, or ever an opportunity to put in a request for additional money coming from other funds just to operate the facility, they would appreciate the help.
- Per Johnny – they will forward the financial report so everyone has an opportunity to review it. Craig stated that Babe Ruth is doing a great job with the facility. It looks better than ever.
- Kevin – has an update regarding funding and the use of park lands in lieu of cash.
- Melissa – won't be making a decision today as it is not listed on our agenda as an action item so we can have further discussion. Melissa then asked if Babe Ruth has been in contact with Legion regarding use of the field. Johnny stated he is working with Legion on this. Will work together.
- Dave – hoping to support as much as we can.
- John suggested they prioritize their needs.
- Per Melissa – Babe Ruth is such an asset to our community and we are so fortunate to have such a robust program.
- Melissa directed Jennifer to put this item on the next agenda as an action item.
- Nancy Erickson suggested we put Helena Babe Ruth funding as part of the county budget discussion as an action item for the April agenda and then put Helena Babe Ruth Funding as an action item on the May agenda. Amy – will their proposal will be part of the county budget? Per Nancy – yes.

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- Andy suggested we provide information for what we are already spending in regards to Helena Babe Ruth to include water systems, pumps, electricity, jersey barriers, mowers, one time expenditures, etc.
- John asked if the Helena Small Fry Football organization does maintenance on the fields. Nate stated that Babe Ruth sub leases the facility to Helena Small Fry Football. \$4,000 annual basis. Johnny is meeting with them in an effort to improve this.
- We will discuss this further next month.

ACTION ITEM: Jennifer will add the County Budget Discussion to the April 6, 2016 agenda.

Review of City Park Use Fees and Policies – Amy

- Last week Amy received an email from Ross regarding our policy of vendors in city parks.
- In 2011, the Parks and Recreation Department created a policy for park use fees (Amy distributed a colored handout). Prior to this, we had no policies/procedures in place for personal or commercial use of our parks. What is our cost recovery for someone who wants to reserve exclusive use of a park?
- What is the community benefit – the broader the community event, the lower percent of cost recovery (example of a community event would be “Yoga in the Park” – offered to all community members at no cost). If you have gain, there is a higher cost of recovery (example of gain would be a family reunion). We also have special permits for food vendors (commercial vendors at a higher recovery).
- We began implementing the program in 2012. The first year, parks and recreation generated over \$5,000 in revenue – this year we generated over \$10,000.
- One of the critical things to note – when this fee resolution was approved, the Commission asked that the funds don’t go to the general fund, but go back into the park improvement program.
- Amy can provide the entire document if anyone is interested.
- Amy will give a more detailed report at the next meeting.

- **Discussion Items**

Park Safety Concerns

Parks Report – Amy and Bret

- In January, the Parks Board asked Amy to gather some information about what other parks are doing as it relates to park hours. What are best practices?
- Sent email message to peers in several different communities and asked the following questions:
 1. Does your community have park hours? If so, what were the main reasons for establishing park hours? Some responses included: complaints of noise and vandalism, to ensure protection, safety and enjoyment of parks – most all stated this was due to vandalism and issues with transients.
 2. How are park hours enforced? All stated hours are enforced by the local police department.
 3. What value do you see in having park hours? Responses included: gives police opportunity to enforce, limits issues with vandalism, late night parties and homeless people sleeping in parks.

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4. How long (as far as you know) has your community had park hours? Responses included: over 30 years (Great Falls), since 2000 (Kalispell), since 1967 (Billings).
 5. Do you think established park hours help in preventing vandalism, litter, and illegal activities in the parks? Responses included: still encounter these activities, but they are less frequent and more enforceable.
 6. Any other information you'd like to share? Can you direct me to additional resources? Responses included: cameras were installed at the skate park and can be monitored by the police department.
- Amy then put into summary of our Helena ordinance relating to park issues. This is taken from Title 7, Chapter 12 – Helena City Code
 - Took 7 bullets reflective of our discussion (nothing related to metal detection).
 - She then looked at city code not related to parks. We have a city code for littering, removal of dog excrement, animals running at large, curfew for minors, open containers, dumping of refuse. We have rules and regulations for natural parks.
 - Administrative policies that are unenforceable – when a park is not reserved in advance, first come first serve basis.
 - Management efforts currently in place: We still continue to do daily removal of litter and garbage; we are doing crime prevention through environmental design; we are installing new signage; we placed a large dumpster in Centennial near the skate park; removed the large performance stage in Women's park; we are having communications with the public and the police department; and we are working with HPD for a parks statistics report.
 - Amy reiterated that national research and trends agree with crime prevention through environmental design.
 - There is also problem-oriented policing – when you know you have a “hot spot”, police can focus on that.
 - Not one answer to all of this – there is going to be a multi-faceted approach to what we do. Amy encouraged committee members to read the report she distributed and to go to the website (<http://www.popcenter.org/responses/>) for more information.
 - Amy doesn't have a recommendation of here is what we do at this point. We need to continue to have these discussions. Per Melissa – the table on page one really makes you understand the situation and issues in our community parks. Amy added that she doesn't want us to use the terminology “curfew”, but rather “park use hours”.
 - While Bret wasn't at the last meeting, he was able to pull some statistics (the information he has is from February). The document provided to Bret shows that there is more patrol in the parks. They are continuing to work on a coding system and using the name of the park name instead of address.
 - Just started this process of logging these events so we can see where police presence needs to be.
 - Melissa – she would be interested to see once we have more data, the frequency and severity of some of our issues (i.e., litter, dog excrement vs. dangerous interactions and altercation).
 - Bret added that weather plays a huge role in this. If the weather is bad, not as many problems. If it is good, they see more loitering, garbage, etc.

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- Amy asked John for a copy of what he did for the school district on usage, frequency of issues, severity, etc. John said he has that in a spreadsheet and will send the information to Amy.
- We will continue this discussion next month.

FOLLOW UP ITEM: **John will send his spreadsheet on the school district usage to Amy for review.**

- **Action Items**

- **Reports**

City	Amy Teegarden	Parks	Craig Marr
County	Kevin Hamilton	Fair Board	Dave Payne
HOLMAC	Jane Kollmeyer	Playgrounds	Stacy Sommer
Lincoln Parks Board	Lonny Cox	School District	John Carter
Recreation	Todd Wheeler		

City

- Amy presented her report on Park Safety Concerns (above). Gave her time to report to Craig and Todd.

County

- Kevin stated that at the last meeting, we discussed how the county spends cash in lieu of park land fund. Looked at grant program from Missoula parks. Kevin was told that Missoula quickly spent the money from that fund and that it is not a renewable resource.
- Some of Missoula’s criteria included a 1 – 1 match – they won’t fund more than 50%.
- For what was presented today, we have to spend money in designated in that area. That amount is \$8,200. That is the total amount for that area. This is money that was collected over several years and is not instantly renewable.
- John asked if the city has the same type of a fund for our subdivision rules. Amy stated that when we do cash in lieu, it is used in a park in the area. We set up specific accounts and don’t keep the money unused very long.
- Kevin will do more formal report for the next meeting.
- Melissa added that the cash in lieu fund is not regularly funded. Once depleted, funds may take time to rebuild. The other take away from Kevin’s research is that they do have a 50% match requirement.

Recreation

- Wrapped up skate rink season – we had to close down a little early due to weather changes. We had the most attendance and revenue ever. Todd is now starting to plan for summer (Kays Kids, Waterpark, etc.).

Parks

- We are starting to see more use of the parks.
- The maintenance department is replacing playground equipment at Barney Park.
- We are doing a lot of work at the 6th Ward Garden Park. The playground is in.

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- We are getting new playground equipment for Clinton Park.
- The maintenance department is gearing up to move into their new shop.
- Getting parks cleaned up after winter.
- Urban forestry staff is assisting with street pruning projects.

Fairground

- Fair board foundation is identifying new long range program. The decision was made touch base with user groups that frequently use the fairgrounds and actually gave Amy's name to the foundation so they can try to get addition potential names. The goal is to sit down in April with these people and find out how they use the facilities and what would they like to see. What is working and what is not?

School District

- Craig, John and Gary Frankforter, Building and Grounds Manager with the Helena School District met to discuss how they can memorialize shared maintenance and capital projects into a written agreement and even a process for capital project requests.
- They discussed shared equip and how to maximize it. An example of this could be the discussion earlier that Babe Ruth wants to purchase a \$4,000 aerator that might get used 2 times a year. This is a great opportunity to create those partnerships and discuss those types of equipment that could potentially be shared.

- **Communications and Future Agenda Items (Board Members)**

- City Budget - FY17
- ADA Transition Plan
- County Budget

- **Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2016**

- **Adjournment**

The City of Helena City-County Parks Board meeting adjourned at 12:58 pm.

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 citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov
 316 North Park, Avenue, Room 440, Helena, MT 59623

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