

Newton Park Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 19, 2022 – 6:15 pm

**Council Chambers - City Hall
101 W 4th Street S
Newton, Iowa**

Minutes

- 1) Meeting called to order at 6:15 pm by Board Chair Humphrey
- 2) Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance statement read by Board Chair Humphrey
- 3) Roll Call: present - Humphrey, Caldwell, Heitman, and Tipton; absent - Osby
- 4) Certification of Iowa Open Meetings Law confirmed by Community Services Director Brian Laube
- 5) Citizen Participation or Comments: none
- 6) Appoint New Park Board Chair and Vice-Chair: No volunteers to take the Chair position. Current Board Chair Humphrey volunteered to continue in that same role.
 - a. Motion by Caldwell & seconded by Tipton to reappoint Melanie Humphrey the board chair for 2022. Motion carried 4-0.
 - b. Motion by Heitman & seconded by Humphrey to appoint Miranda Caldwell the board vice-chair for 2022. Motion carried 4-0.
- 7) Review and approve minutes from November 17, 2021 Park Board meeting:
 - a. Motion by Caldwell & seconded by Heitman to approve said minutes. No discussion. Motion carried 4-0.
- 8) 2022 Parks and Recreation Programming Update:
 - a. Community Services Director Brian Laube briefed the board on a recent staffing reorganization that allowed Community Services to hire a new full time position: Parks Recreation Specialist. Brian then introduced Victoria Jordan as this new employee.
 - b. Victoria Jordan then highlighted the proposed 2022 schedule of events with the board. These events included, but not limited to: teen camps, Earth Week, disc golf tournaments, senior walks, adult soccer league, men's softball league, sand volleyball league, pool parties, events with the Library, tennis skills camps, Newton Cares Classic Golf tournament, Frankfest, senior's breakfast club, Halloween in Maytag Park, and Holiday Lights.
- 9) Update on proposed park bond referendum:
 - a. Community Services Director Brian Laube briefed the board on recent progress on this item. This included:
 - i. A staff presentation to council on December 20, 2021; and two discussion items held at council on January 3, 2022 and January 17, 2022.
 - ii. All three sessions included basically the same content, with the discussion item session seeking direction or guidance from City Council. This included the current City Council and Park Board goals being highlighted, cost estimates and brief discussion on all of these goals, and possible timelines to hold a special election.
 - iii. Laube shared that the plan was to present a resolution to City Council for their

Park Board Chair – Melanie Humphrey

Park Board Members – Miranda Caldwell, Bryce Heitman, Jeff Osby, & Rachelle Tipton.

consideration on February 7th that included the following based on Council feedback received on January 17, 2022:

1. Four projects: Westwood Clubhouse improvements, Maytag Pool play features, pickleball courts at Aurora Park, and a dog park at Sunset Park.
 2. The special election on June 7, 2022.
- b. Discussion followed:
1. Board member Heitman voiced his concerns about this process, and that the Park Board did not get a say in recommending what projects should be included in the proposed bond referendum. He continued sharing that he didn't know where council got their information to make their recommendations on projects to include, and that he was getting texts during the recent council meeting from people upset with the process. Brian Laube reminded the board that although the scheduled December 15th Park Board meeting ended up being cancelled due to severe weather, the Park Board has had a say in recommending projects to Council in their annual goal setting session. Laube reminded all that these Park Board goals were shared by him during all three recent council presentations/discussions.
 2. Mayor Hansen then addressed the board with the following comments:
 - a. He agreed that this proposed park bond referendum process has been fast-tracked, but shared that Council did consider the Park Board's goals in making their recommendations to staff on how they'd like this to proceed.
 - b. The Mayor then asked Board member Heitman if his concerns are focused on the splashpad project not being included in Council's recent recommendation to staff. Heitman said that the concern from citizens was with the overall spending on the projects.
 - c. The Mayor continued by reminding the board that Council has designated the property for the splashpad project, it has been included in a larger redevelopment agreement, and that one comment by a single council member doesn't mean the project won't happen. He continued by sharing that council members receive input from citizens, and that is also part of their decision making process.
 - d. The Mayor continued by sharing that City staff works with boards and commissions to provide feedback to council. He then reminded them that although the Park Board is advisory only, Council and staff do value their opinions.
 - e. The Mayor also shared that the proposed \$1.6 million park bond referendum, if passed, will not raise the City's tax levy.
 - f. In closing, the Mayor apologized to the board for the fast-track of the project, but then reminded them that the biggest complaint from people is the current Westwood Clubhouse and that is why it's a top priority of Council.
 3. Brian Laube then also apologized for not suggesting holding a special park board meeting following the cancelled meeting on December 15th.
- c. A brief discussion then occurred at the conclusion of this item, with Board member Heitman reminding everyone of a past discussion focusing on quality of parks over quantity of parks, and that maybe we should discuss right-sizing the park system by selling off some land. Brian Laube said he would be open to starting that discussion again, but there would be no guarantees that possible recommendations would make it on a council agenda. Laube also cautioned the board that this could stir things up with the public as it had with another recent proposal to sell off a

parcel. Board Chair Humphrey said it wouldn't hurt to visit this at some point in the future.

10) Old Business

- a. Agnes Patterson Park Walking Loop - Community Services Director Brian Laube provided an update that Community Services' staff is now plowing snow for this trial program, and that positive feedback has been received to-date.

11) New Business

- a. Upcoming Comprehensive Plan work session – Community Services Director Brian Laube shared that the Community Services Department is planning to conduct a work session with the Park Board at their February board meeting on the comprehensive plan.
- b. Community Services Director Brian Laube shared that the department is working on the process to allow food trucks in the park system, and that more would be shared with the board at an upcoming meeting.
- c. Board member Heitman announced that due to family commitments, he is stepping down immediately from the Park Board. Brian Laube thanked Bryce for his service to the board and City.

12) Adjourn: motion by Heitman and seconded by Caldwell to adjourn. Motion carried by 4-0 vote. Meeting adjourned at 7:07 PM.

BJL
1-19-22