



MINUTES OF THE PARKS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2023, 5:00 PM

In person at City Hall, Room 207.

Virtual attendance is also available via Zoom.

A. ZOOM MEETING INFORMATION.

I. This item contains Zoom information, instructions, and a link to the Virtual Comment Form.

B. ROLL CALL.

Present: Ald. Chris Wery-Committee Chair, Ald. Steven Campbell-Vice-Chair, Ald. Melinda Eck.

Excused: Ald. Mark Steuer

Others Present: Director Dan Ditscheit, Deputy Director James Andersen

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to approve.

Motion Passed.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to approve.

Motion Passed.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None.

E. REGULAR BUSINESS.

I. Consideration with possible action on the request by NEW Leaf to install and manage various food forest gardens at Seymour Park.

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to open the floor for discussion.

Motion carried.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to close the floor for discussion.

Motion carried.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to approve the request by NEW Leaf to install and manage various food forest gardens at Seymour Park. Motion carried.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None

F. INFORMATIONAL.

1. Director's Report on updates and recent activities of the Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department.

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to receive and place on file the Director's Report. Motion carried.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None

2. Next Meeting: May 10, 2023.

G. ADJOURNMENT.

Moved by Ald. Melinda Eck, seconded by Ald. Steven Campbell to adjourn. Motion carried.

Yes- Steven Campbell, Melinda Eck, Chris Wery, No- None, Abstain- None

VERBATIM MINUTES

- Issue on that was-
- Okay.
- We are recording now.
- Now's there's that commission.
- All right, the Parks Committee will come to order, and we will note that Alder Wery is present, Alder Campbell, Alder Eck, and Alder Steuer is excused. And should we rise for the pledge of allegiance?
- Yes.
- Yep.
- We're gonna start a new tradition here. All right, I pledge allegiance to the flag.
- [All] Of The United States of America, to the republic for which it stands. One nation, under God, indivisible. Liberty and justice for all.
- Thank you, and what are your wishes for the agenda?
- Thank you.
- Sorry, we were discussing the other flags.
- There's other flags out there. Motion to approve.

- Motion by Eck to approve the agenda.
- Second.
- Second by Campbell. Any discussion on that? Those in favor?
- Aye.
- Aye.
- Opposed? That carries, approval of the minutes.
- Motion to approve.
- Second.
- Motion by Eck, seconded by Steuer to approve the minutes.
- Steuer?
- Campbell.
- Okay. Mark's not here. Mark's not. Those in favor?
- Aye.
- Aye.
- Opposed? Motion carried. Our one item.
- One item.
- Consideration of possible action and the request by NAW New leaf to install and manage various food forest gardens at Seymour Park.
- Yeah, so I'll give a brief presentation and overview of the project, and then I would recommend opening up the floor. We have several people who are here to voice their support of this project. But in general, they brought a proposal forward, and they wanted to create a food forest in Seymour Park. And if you're not familiar with what a food forest is, it's a various... It can be considered an edible garden using natural landscaping for the most part. But it can be other more formal plantings also. So and it consists of various layers. So you have a canopy, and a tree layer, you have a shrub layer, and then you have a ground layer, and then you plant various things that are all edible such as the trees can be fruits and nut trees, you can do asparagus on the ground, there's different shrubs that have various types of berries that are all edible. And if you take a look at the map that's included in the agenda packet, they actually have several different locations within the park where they're proposing to add various edible gardens. What we're actually proposing to do initially here is give them approval to build edible garden in zone one and zone two on the map. Now zone one is actually an existing edible garden that's there. So this group would be doing additional maintenance to it to improve it and just make it a little bit better than it is. And then zone two is to create a brand new edible garden or food forest, let's say, on just east of Ashland Avenue. So the bulk of the park is west of Ashland Avenue. The area that we're gonna focus on for the first trial garden is east of Ashland Avenue. And what the game plan here is, is we'll allow them to plant the area and maintain it over time. And then if things go well, we can always expand into other areas of the park. What you see in this master plan also shows where the post

storm water pond is gonna go in relation to the food forest. Right now the storm water pond is not built yet so obviously we're having to plant any food forest plantings in the general vicinity of the pond until that's actually in place. So this is a multi project, and we're just gonna start with the first year doing the first garden and then maintenance on the garden that's already existing there, and see how it goes. And they'll work very closely with staff to select the plants, and we'll work with them on a planting plan, and then we'll monitor it over the next year and just make sure it's maintained to city standards. So right now there really is no city... I mean, there will be city staff involved, but not really on the ongoing maintenance of it. It's just more or less oversight of the planting, and then just making sure it gets maintained over time. Now the city does have a little over \$7,000 available that we would like to donate towards this project on the purchase plans. That doesn't need committee approval to do it. That's something that I, as the director, can approve. And just so you know where that funding came from, is that edible garden, which is the one that we talked about that they're going to maintain, that was actually built in conjunction with a community garden that's also in the park right now, and we received grant funding to actually build those two gardens maybe eight years ago, nine years ago. So it's been quite a while, and then they gave us a little bit of money as kind of a reserve fund to do maintenance on those gardens. So, you know, we really haven't tapped into that account too much. This is really in line with that grant funding. So that \$7,000 is not really tax money. It was money that we received from a grant. So from there, that's a little brief presentation on what a food forest is, and where it's going, and how it's going to be maintained moving forward. From here I would recommend you just open up the floor and ask questions to the group that's here who are going to be the ones responsible to maintain this facility.

- Motion to open the floor.

- Second.

- Motion by Alder Eck to open the floor. Second by Alder Campbell. Discussion. Those in favor?

- Aye.

- Opposed? Motion carried. If anybody's here for this item, and you wanna talk about it, just come up and give your name and address.

- Don't be scared. Someone opened it up.

- [Andy] Don't think I'm allowed to talk. I'm helping, but I'm from Denmark.

- I'm sure you can.

- Anybody can talk.

- You have the fanciest clothes on. You dressed for it.

- You've been nominated.

- I had to change out of that diaper. And it's fine if nobody wants to speak. You don't have to. I can answer any questions.

- What's your name and address?

- [Andy] Andy DiMezza, 191 Dworak Avenue. My wife imported me from Milwaukee, she's from Denmark. She needed to marry somebody she wasn't related to.

- Wow.

- Shots fired.

- I guess.

- [Andy] Either way I'm the stay-at-home dad now, I drive a school bus. I was a certified, am a certified arborist, and down in Milwaukee, I actually helped the homegrown office there grow all of their fruit orchards. So their flagship orchard where we put fruit trees on the tallest natural spot in the whole city is going strong. I go back every year and teach boy scouts how to prune fruit trees. It's partnered with a local Lutheran church that has the St. Vincent de Paul kitchen, and the homeless people, and non-homeless people, families. It's partnered with a youth program. When I started there, there were kids that were literally hitting the ground dodging bullets. Not a great time. By the time I left in 2016, we weren't doing that anymore. We were able to turn things around, and with our partnerships with people like Trinity Lutheran, some of the Catholic groups, 'cause we've applied for funding with the Norbertine Brothers. We can work with what's already happening in that neighborhood to continue this now. So I appreciate you guys considering it, and I'm looking forward to showing up for years here just like I've been doing in Milwaukee. And yeah, let's catch up and then surpass them.

- Can you speak a little bit about how the food is gonna be distributed and what your plan is once it starts growing edible food?

- Absolutely. So we've got a good what, three to five years? And three is very generous with a food forest in these types of plants. We will have some things like raspberries, and thimble berries, which is a type of raspberry. We'll eat those fresh. Now there's kids that are playing soccer on that east side of the park in the summer daily, I'd say. So that stuff will be eaten fresh. As much as we'll try to stop them, the birds will eat some of the raspberries. And then over the years, we actually have permission to use Trinity Lutheran's kitchen. So you can do up to the current cottage food laws up to \$10,000 worth of food. That's gonna be jams and stuff because those are the types of plants we're planting. The other option, which we've talked about quite a bit is you set up a free vegetable stand, you set the food out, and people can have it fresh. You gotta check it every day though. In case stuff goes bad, it has to be composted. And then over time, we are working with Trinity Lutheran. They have a pantry and they can expand and upgrade their kitchen to be commercial up to code to Green Bay and Brown County standards. I'm a global food safety person from Abbott Labs at one point. I can help them design and figure out that kitchen.

- And then just one other thing to note is if you look through the proposal, you'll see that there's gonna be a lot of signage out there too so that the public can actually see a photo of what's edible with a name on it. So it just gives them a little more information to decide whether or not it's appropriate for them.

- That's actually an excellent idea, and is it mostly items that people would recognize, or are there going to be... For Christmas, I got a foraging book in Wisconsin, and there's tons of things we can eat that we don't even know that we think are just plants, right? So are there gonna be some of those items, or is it mostly, you know, items people recognize, raspberries, apples?

- It'll be 50-50. It'll be some plums, apricots, the thimble berries people will just think are raspberries. They're the same thing except thimble berries go bad quick and don't ship very well. And yeah, I think it should go well, the education and Dylan over here of NWTC who we're working with to hopefully add QR codes to those signs, and have NWTC host those so that they can get updated over time.

- Good, all right.

- Okay, so will there be fences around it? Something I guess I'm envisioning if people are there at the park, they may just go in and help themselves. Is that what your intentions are?

- Only what is put on the sign. We wanna be safe. My wife is an emergency doctor. They care, and she has multiple times told me don't let people get stuff that can poison them. For instance, Josh over here stopped me. I used to grow buffalo/silver berry at a homestead I lived at, and uncooked, there's small amounts of toxins in there. We had to remove it from the plant. Is it safe? 99.9% yes. But this is public land, you guys are taking a chance on us. We're not taking any chances.

- So they can help themselves?

- Yes.

- Okay.

- And they'll be actively monitoring what plants are there. So if, you know, you get some wild plants that grow up that aren't appropriate, they're gonna be doing regular maintenance out there in those.

- Pesticides?

- Only those that are on the USDA organic list that we put in the plant, and frankly the answer is mostly no. Josh?

- [Josh] The plan will be not to use anything unless we really need to, and then we'll post. The hope will be to have a community board, and if we spray anything with anything, we will make sure public knows on all the social media accounts and on the signage. The plan will be not to give anything. There will be, I mean the current edible walkway which has been up for eight years now, we've never done anything with it. When invasives come in, we cover things with cardboard and then we chip over it. So yeah, we never hit it with anything that would harm anybody.

- I mean, it all sounds great. I mean, I don't know how many plants we're planning on planting or trees. I mean, I have apple trees, I've had cherry trees, I got asparagus, I've got berries in my backyard. It's about all I can handle. But birds usually gets the cherries, the neighbors usually get the apples, and I tried corn once. got that. And the berries got killed by spraying the fence for weeds.

- Yep, that will happen. Did you try the raccoons? They might've tasted good after the corn.

- There is a sanctuary that's in my district. They don't wanna kill any wildlife unless it's causing problems.

- Thank you.

- How big is your-

- It's gonna take a long time. I'm sorry.

- I'm sorry. No, go ahead.

- So I mean, like to supply a food pantry, I mean, talking an orchard here, I mean, how many"

- It was eight trees of different species. That's not gonna provide a lot. We're not giving them everything.

- Yeah.

- It's an outlet in case we can't eat everything ourselves, or the community isn't quite as hungry as we had hoped.

- Well, even as an activity to get everybody together is good enough cause I guess.
- We've got Schreiber Foods committed to bringing 37 people on May 18th if, and I'll let them know that, if we have ourselves lined up to do that work. We have a backup plan just in case.
- Show of hands?
- I know we've got several. Quite a few.
- Yeah, there's probably double this.
- Yeah.
- Once it gets going, we can keep our options open.
- I'm meeting with a group of young neighborhood kids that Tanya Westmorland, president of their neighborhood association, set up. My personal hope is to work with Trinity to use their space to create a youth program like we had in Milwaukee and, you know, it's a little less dangerous up here, so I'm actually pretty excited about it.
- Is that the church right next door?
- Kind of. So on the east side you can go through an empty lot that they own, and then across the other road, and I forget the name of that and they're right there.
- [Jeff] It's right on the north side of the ship garden.
- Any other questions from the committee? Anything else you wanna add? Anything else? No? Thank you.
- Motion to close the floor.
- Second.
- Motioned by Eck, seconded by Campbell to close the floor. Discussion. Motion in favor?
- Aye.
- Aye.
- Opposed? Motion carried. What are your wishes?
- Make a motion to approve.
- Second.
- Motion by Alder Eck second by Alder Campbell to approve. This goes to council next week Tuesday for final approval for the rest of the council. I also vote yes so that carries unanimously. And good luck.
- Thank you.
- Thank you for your willingness to do this.
- We're done already?

- Thank you, guys.
- We're done. Yes.
- Or we could be reconsider and put you through the wringer.
- That diaper was rough.
- I don't really have anything to add other than what's in the report, and there's a lot going on right now with spring here. We're trying to get that up and running for next week. Sanctuary up and running for the season. Playground programs, pools, athletic fields. We're really busy. Spring is our busiest season.
- I see. Not that it's a park thing, but we're planting a couple trees in Arbor Day on Friday.
- Yep. Yep, we have several locations where we're planting trees. Let's see if I have those.
- Not much of a notice to get the neighbors together.
- The exact locations. I can email you all the information 'cause I don't know off the top of my head.
- Well, I'll be there. Really hold. I only got a day to read it, but pretty hard to get all the neighbors to go do it.
- Well, we've been advertising it so we've been getting the word out on our end to a certain degree.
- Social media.
- I do have one question and if I missed it, sorry. Summer soccer starts in June. Will that path be in by then?
- The path will not be in. So what happened with that is we actually bid that out for construction along with another project, and we did not get any bids on it.
- Oh, no bids?
- And so we are kind of re-strategizing how to do it, and get that project done yet this year. So it's still on our horizon, but we just have to figure out if there's another project that we can lump it into.
- Oh, is that ?
- I was thinking it, but I didn't say it.
- Just a comment, I caught a tournament at Newport Beach on the what is it, the new thing?
- Pickleball.
- Pickleball. It was pretty intense.
- We have a Pickleball.
- I watched the whole thing. I was like, holy cow, you know?
- It's a growing sport that's for sure.

- I didn't quite catch it. Is that a whiffle ball?
- Yeah, it is a whiffle ball. I just saw them in Fleet Farm. So like a bigger, bigger but like with holes in it. At least the ones at Fleet Farm, it was at night.
- It was as fast as ping pong.
- Well, there's indoor and outdoor balls. You gotta make sure you got the right one.
- Well, the one in John-
- If you wanna try it out, let me know. I'll be joining.
- Remember keep that in the plan for Pickle Park.
- You put one in at John Muir, right? The part of the tennis court is now a pickle ball?
- I think it's painted.
- It was painted for pickle ball so you can play there. But yeah, there is an active Pickleball league on the east side. They're always willing to teach people how to play.
- Well, I was just gonna buy some and do it with my daughter.
- Professionals out there to really spur your interest even more.
- Well this thing, they even followed up as a informational thing. They actually showed 'em doing it on a tennis court that wasn't getting used, and they showed the blacktop, they showed the lines, they showed all the setup and the dimensions and the whole nine yards. It was really a kind of a-
- Come to my neighborhood and I'll show you ours.
- You know how they say your phone is like listening to you? I think my TV does the same thing, you know, 'cause awesome.
- It popped up after we were talking about it. I'm kidding, right?
- I guess just one other thing to mention, so staffing for summer help is doing much better than last year.
- That's good.
- We're still not full with anything for the most part. So we still need more ride operators, We still need some more summer playground leaders, and really the area we're struggling with the most is our lifeguards. So we're still struggling with lifeguards, but we're doing better than we did last year. So it's still too early to say whether or not we're gonna have all three pools open, but we're still working towards it.
- We're ahead of the curve. That's good. Good to hear.
- Sent a shiver down my spine when you said we don't know.
- Well, I'll add to that just real briefly is the possibility of just having all three pools open is highly, but whether or not we have them open depending on what the schedule might be. Like, it might be a varying schedule, or it might only be maybe swim lessons and, you know, other programs at Coburn and open, you know, more of an

open family swim than the other two. You know, those kind of things. We might have to look at a variation of the schedule a little bit depending on how many staff we get.

- And that's what we did last year with our pools, and so it's really dependent on how many lifeguards do we have on staff. But that's our most difficult position at this point to fill. If you know anybody, send them our way.

- Will do that.

- All right.

- Motion to receive and place on file.

- Motion to receive and place on file by Alder Eck.

- Second.

- Second by Alder Campbell. Those in favor?

- Aye.

- Opposed? Motion carried. When's our next meeting? May 10th.

- Motion to adjourn.

- Motion to adjourn by Alder Eck.

- Seconded.

- Second by Alder Campbell. Those in favor?

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Opposed? Motion carried. We are adjourned. Thank you.

- All right. Leave meeting.