

VERMILION PARKS & RECREATION BOARD

Minutes of September 20, 2022 - 6:00pm

Roll Call: Kate Repola, Liz Elden, William Warden, Bill Malin, Tina Swinehart, Dennis Brudney. Absent: Jeff Keck

Also, Present: Marc Weisenberger, Parks Operation Manager; Teresa Mayle, Council Representative.

Guest: Mayor Forthofer

Kate Repola, Chairwoman called the meeting of September 20, 2022, to order.

Approval of Minutes:

B. Warden MOVED; L. Elden seconded to approve the meeting minutes of August 16, 2022. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Correspondence:

K. Repola announced that special guests were present who helped the city with the Vermilion Community Pool this summer. She recognized the Kiwanis Club with their pool donation.

Sherri Tarpchinoff Bennett, President of the Kiwanis Club introduced Mike Bennett, Treasurer; Laurie Kissling, Member; Kathy Cislo, Director; and Tom Kime, Vice President. She explained the Kiwanis Club had been approached by the Rotary Club to join in the efforts to raise funds for the pool, so they did hotdogs for donations at the Saturday, Market in the Park all summer. They were able to raise \$572.72 to go towards the pool that they presented to the Parks Board. K. Repola thanked the Kiwanis Club on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Board. She said the pool is an invaluable resource to Vermilion and every donation goes right to the kids and residents that enjoy the pool every day.

Karen Viterna, President of the Vermilion Rotary Club introduced the following members of the Rotary Club - Jonathan Logue, Bob Kowalski, and Jennifer Allred. Tina Swinehart said she had the privilege of working with this group. She knows Rotary does an awful lot for the community and she had an opportunity to work closely with them on the Pancake Breakfast and the Putt for the Pool at Romp's. She said these events were fun and successful. Karen Viterna said the Rotary Club was happy to present a check to the Parks & Recreation Board for \$8,808. K. Repola said this is the second year in a row that the Rotary Club has come through to really help the Parks Board out. K. Viterna said the community supported the efforts, so it was Vermilion. K. Repola thanked the Rotary Club for their donation and help. M. Weisenberger said it was important to

note that with the help of all the service groups, they can cover all their operating expenses for the season.

K. Repola announced the Parks & Recreation Board received a card from Maria Santoferraro who runs yoga at Main Street Beach. She donated \$450 towards the Main Street Beach Revitalization Project, so she thanked Maria on behalf of the board.

Jody Booker said she was not sure if she wanted to start off telling the board members what she needed or why she needed it. So, she decided the best and fastest explanation is to say she needs to borrow space on a tree at Sherod Park for a wind phone. That seems too simple to be it. So, she explained the why.

A Japanese garden designer had lost a family member to cancer and decided to put a phone in his garden where he could make calls on the old, disconnected telephone. He would let the wind carry his voice to his missing loved ones. After he saw the devastation in Japan caused by the 2011 tsunami, he designed a phone booth for the city.

The wind phone was not designed with any specific religious connotation, but as a way for a person to cope with loss. His phone has had over 30,000 visitors and has since been duplicated in many other places. The wind phone is now showing up in parks across the United States. There is one in Olympia Park in Washington State, and one in North Carolina.

Many have lost loved ones after the most recent Covid 19 pandemic, and she is sure they would benefit from the phone. However, her reason for the phone is on a very personal level. She lost her mom and best friend on Feb. 11, 2020. She spoke to her on the phone or in person every day of her entire life and she misses talking to her.

Everyone has different ways of coping with loss. The wind phone only needs two things to work. The first is imagination! It may seem like a little much for someone with traditional values. It may even be hard if you are lucky enough to never have been fighting with grief. She never thought she would find herself taking walks alone looking up at the sky and telling her mom she got a new job or asking her if she should buy the expensive shoes she does not need. But it has happened.

The phone will be mounted on a board that will have information about the phone on it. The board and the message will have a protective coating, so it is not destroyed by the weather.

She contacted the tree commission and spoke in detail with Jerry Western. He has given her instruction on how to attach the board to the tree without damaging the tree. She said she will follow his recommendation.

The tree is at the east end of Sherod Park in the area where the baseball diamond was and at the north end near the lake. The phone is an old rotary dial wall phone. For safety, the phone cord

will be short and secured to the receiver so it cannot be removed. The cord will be connected inside the phone to allow the cord to break free if heavy weight was put on it. The phone will be mounted high enough that small children cannot reach it and the board itself will be smaller than the width of the tree, so it does not stick out.

The board message will be one what looks like a clip board that says:

Welcome to Darlene's Wind Phone.

In life we loved them dearly, in death we love them still. Our hearts hold a place no one can ever fill.

Phone directions are 1 Use your imagination, 2 Dial a number, 3 Say hello, goodbye or until we meet again. 4 Talk if you want, and 5 When you are finished let the wind deliver your message. It also has a Facebook page address where people can log their visit. So, this is her why – She needs a space on a tree at Sherod Park. If the board allows her to install the phone, she will check on the phone and will make sure it remains nice and looks presentable. She will also make sure the information about the phone is online and available on social media.

K. Repola said this is beautiful and thanked her. She asked if the board could look on Facebook to see photos of how other communities do this. J. Booker said there are several different websites, but she just named two, but they are popping up more. The main wind phone was in an actual phone booth, but some of the other ones had the phone mounted and some are better than others. She said she has someone putting together the wind phone assembly professionally. She said the board has rounded edges and it will look like a plaque. It has beveled edges and the phone is a green wall mounted rotary phone and she could put a sticker on it stating that the phone is disconnected and cannot be used for emergencies as she was trying to think of the safety issues in making sure nothing bad happens. She explained there are three trees at Sherod Park that stand together at the very end near the lake and the phone would be placed on one of the three trees. The board is only 9" wide and 20" long, so it would be a little bigger than the size of a legal piece of paper. She said the phone would have a protective clear seal over it, so rain and weather would not make it look bad after one rain. They took the phone apart and made the cord small. The cord that goes into the phone will be secured inside, but for any reason someone would do something bad, it would just pull out and nothing would happen.

She mentioned that Teresa in the city's finance department and her were talking one day because they both lost their mother's and she said some days she just wished she could give her a call, and Teresa asked her if she ever heard of the wind phone as she had wished there was one around. So, it is not like you want to stand in the middle of town talking to yourself on a disconnected phone, so she thought this location was out of the way. K. Repola said it is a beautiful place for it. J. Booker said it is not in a part where kids normally tend to visit alone, so you do not have kids on bikes that will do something to the phone or to themselves. It is more of

an adult park area that you drive to. She said if kids are down there, then there is more to worry about than the phone because they are right at the edge of the water.

B. Malin asked how far back this would be from the edge. M. Weisenberger said about 30', but it is not in an area where there is heavy erosion. J. Booker said it is flat ground and there are three trees that are together. It would be placed on the south side of the tree, so you are on the phone facing the lake. She noted that Jerry Western said these are mature trees, so they should not have to worry about the growth. K. Repola said it sounded like Jody put in a lot of thought and research.

L. Elden MOVED; B. Warden seconded to give Jody Booker permission to place a wind phone at Sherod Park. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

COMMUNITY EVENT GROUP USE PERMITS:

Main Street Vermilion

Market in the Park – July 1, 2023 – August 26, 2023, from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Victory Park)

Richard Kime said his wife is the real brains behind the Market in the Park. He said it is their pleasure to be Market Managers, as they are proud of Vermilion. This year, they had a record year as far as vendors. They have had more vendors than they have ever have before and 100% of the vendors are coming back, plus they have additional vendors who have signed up, so they will increase even more so. They have had four hundred people attend per Saturday to enjoy the different vendors and hopefully the downtown to shop. They are continuing this program as they think it is a great asset to Vermilion as it brings people to Vermilion, and as a vendor himself – it is a great place. He said 96% of the vendors have either exceeded what they made the year before or have averaged what they have made the year before. They have tried to include community groups like the Kiwanis, and they had the Lions Club attend twice this year. They had the library conduct programs for children, so they are trying to involve the community into the park, and they think the park represents the community. They are requesting again for next year the same dates starting the first Saturday in July and ending the last Saturday in August. K. Repola said she attended the market several times this year and it was absolutely beautiful.

T. Swinehart MOVED; B. Warden seconded to approve the Community Group Use Permit for the Market in the Park in 2023 in Victory Park. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

City Council Representative Report:

Teresa Mayle mentioned that News Channel 5 spotlighted one of her girl scouts, Emily Pisano for her artwork she was selling at the market.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Forthofer reported the Comfort Station is moving along and the supply chain is providing what they need. The plan is to be complete with the project by the end of October. He said people are excited and some feel the building is too tall, but this is because the porch has not been put on yet.

He said the ballet was a huge success at Village Green. He thanked M. Weisenberger for attending to this park very well leading up to the ballet by watering, seeding, and manicuring the area for the stage.

He noted he has been in conversation this week with the United States Army Corp of Engineers about the Recreational Use Permit for the pier, which is off the Wakefield section. There is supposed to be a permit to allow people to walk out on it, but it is not looking good because they are concerned about the fact there are not railings, signage, or ladders that will provide safety. He said they have not issued their verdict yet, but it may not be favorable. He said if it is not favorable, then he asked them for a list of what is needed, so they can see if they can get it. K. Repola asked if you must go through the Army Corp of Engineers to have something like this. Mayor Forthofer said yes because it is federal.

He said the finance director was hoping to be at the meeting as she had a conflicting engagement, but he suggested that the board consider having a work session over the finances with the finance director at a time that is convenient for everyone.

Parks Operation Manager Report:

Marc Weisenberger updated the board on the Sherod Park Playground project by noting they broke ground two weeks ago. He said Mark Haynes Construction did all the excavating and folks from Independence Construction donated 13 trucks of 250 tons of stone to put down for their drainage and base. They are at a point where everything has been graded and is ready for installation of the equipment, which is scheduled to be delivered on Thursday. It could take two to three weeks to install the equipment which will begin immediately. He reported that ECO Tree cleaned out trees as their contribution and Terry Pena moved two smaller trees for them. He said Mark Haynes has been a huge help on this project. He said not all their funding is totally secured at this point, so after talking with L. Elden and A. Hendricks this week, they are initially going to do all the playground in the engineered wood fiber, which is mulch. They can do the whole playground for \$11,598, but to do the two sections with pour in place material, which is about a third of the playground, it will cost \$68,000. The goal will be to continue to look for resources to put the pour in place material in eventually. He said the mulch will also allow them the opportunity to see if they are going to have any drainage issues. However, during the last heavy rain they had no puddles or ponding water, so hopefully they are in good shape. He said the finance director helped him today with getting three purchase orders in place that will get them through the project. He said they will look for opportunities for park bench placement.

B. Warden addressed the caution erosion signs at Showse Park due to the dangers on lakefront property. He thought they should read "Caution! Hazardous Area" and he hoped they had enough signs so nobody will ignore it. He said there was one sign he saw at Showse, which was close to the parking lot, but it said, "Caution! Due To The Erosion Of The Area, No Mowing Beyond This Point." He said it does not say anything about potential danger or a hazard, which would be more meaningful for a kid on a bike or a person walking their dog. It addresses the reason for a mower to stay away, but it escapes the danger of potentially stepping of the edge or getting too close. He wondered if they could put up a couple more signs that stress, "Caution! Dangerous Conditions – Stay Back." M. Weisenberger said they used the same signs that they used at Nokomis and the top says, "Caution! Keep Away from Edge" and then on the bottom it says, "Due to Bluff Erosion – No Mowing Beyond this Point," which he felt was a little more pertinent. He said there are two signs at Sherod and two at Showse, but he will add an additional sign at both parks. T. Swinehart addressed the signs at Nokomis and said caution is in all capital letters that are pretty large, and it says, "Keep Away from the Edge" at the top of the sign, but people are going to do what they want to do anyway whether you have twenty signs or two signs. However, the signs will help the city with their liability. K. Repola said they can revisit the best placement of the signs.

B. Warden said a resident in the Showse Park neighborhood mentioned the walking paths to him and he asked if they will ever be restored as far as bark or stone. M. Weisenberger said they have been mowing the paths like they do at Sherod and he has received positive feedback. B. Warden said they look quite nice. M. Weisenberger said eventually it would be nice to get impacted stone.

D. Brudney commented on the Sherod Park playground and when Jody was talking about the wind phone, she had said it is more of an adult park, but he thought it was more of an adult park, but it could become more of a children's park if they put their best playground of the city out there. He said they have the erosion problems on the east side of the park at Showse and Sherod, so what kind of safeguards are they going to put out there in case kids begin walking over in this area. M. Weisenberger said they have the same signs at Sherod as they do at Showse, and they will put up a third sign at both locations. K. Repola thought what Jody meant is the fact that this usually is not a park where children are unattended because the nature of the playground is that adults drive children there to use the playground, which is far away from the location of where the wind phone will be.

Budget/Finance Subcommittee Report:

L. Elden said they can address the finances when they discuss the purchase orders.

Erosion:

B. Warden said they have become aware of some grant money that may be used to address the erosion problems at couple of the parks that are suffering. This is something they hope to investigate, but he is optimistic that in the next couple of months they can get something more formalized. M. Weisenberger said they need to put a solid committee together that can look hard at funding sources. T. Swinehart said she is definitely interested in working on the committee for this purpose.

Main Street Beach Revitalization Project:

K. Repola said there is no news to report as they are continuing to work on private donations. B. Malin asked if there was any update on the area that is going to replace the deck temporarily. K. Repola said not at this time. T. Swinehart said the Adirondack chairs have been ordered and asked if they were expected to arrive soon. K. Repola believed they will be in for next spring. She noted that there had been discussion on how to secure them and place them properly in an interim fashion.

Recreation and School Relations: No report.

Sherod Playground: No additional report.

Vermilion Community Pool Subcommittee:

D. Brudney mentioned the night they held the Lifeguard Appreciation Program at the pool, they received a donation from the Lions Club for \$500. He asked A. Hendricks if any of the donations have been inputted into the pool financials to date. A. Hendricks said they received the first \$500 check from the Lions Club, which was added, but even though they had not received the check from Kiwanis, she included it in the most recent report. She said income wise they seem solid at this point, but they still have a couple of months of utility bills for heating and electric, and they are in the process of running the last payroll. She said the vending in the amount of \$271.55 was added. D. Brudney explained the \$271.55 was 10% of the vending company's take. He mentioned the fact that Stan who is the owner of the vending company made a \$200 donation and when they held the Movie Night at the pool, he gave free snacks from what was left in the vending machines. He said there was a letter in the Photojournal on how well the Movie Night went.

He reported that Labor Day was the last day at the pool. They had limited hours the last two weeks after school resumed and during the week, they did not get too many people in attendance, but on the weekends, they had good participation.

He reported the pool was winterized last week and the cover was put on, and the furniture was stored in the barn. Additionally, in the next week or two Gross Brothers will come and winterize the pool building, which includes the hot water tank and the bathrooms.

The vending machines were closed before Labor Day. He said they had nine lifeguards that were recertified for next year, which came out of the \$4,500 grant they received for the lifeguards this year. He noted they are paid up for up to sixteen recertifications. When they recertified the instructors this year under the new program, they are recertified for two years instead of one, which will be a cost savings. He said they heard from the pool managers that there were no bad accidents at the pool this year. There were only a couple of bee stings and bruises.

He said they received outstanding reviews on the pool steps and how much it helped everyone. He said it increased their age bracket of older folks.

He noted that both pool managers are willing to return next year and the primary manager, Jean Habermehl is already looking for grants for more pool programs.

He reviewed with board members pool statistics for 2022, which is attached hereto and made a part of the official minutes. L. Elden reported the pool revenue doubled from 2022 compared to 2019. They went from \$17,000 to over \$35,000 this year. D. Brudney thanked everyone for their pool donations and noted that every area increased this year, and they had \$2,934 daily admissions, which did not include members, which is nice. A. Hendricks said with the \$20,000 in donations, it looks like they will be close to breaking even.

K. Repola suggested getting together early next year as a subcommittee, including the finance director, parks operation director, and pool managers to discuss what they can do to cover the \$20,000. She thought they could make a more concrete budget now that they have another summer under their belts. She said they can discuss the priority of the pool and how they can make it work financially. T. Swinehart said this was a good idea because the Rotary Club said more than one time, that this is not their goal, even though they have done a wonderful job with fundraising for the pool. K. Repola said they have other obligations in the community, and they have helped keep the pool afloat for two years, so they need to think about ways how they can manage the pool on their own. Mayor Forthofer said this was a realistic thing to do. He said originally there were two goals – one was to see how they can keep the existing pool active, but they do not want to lose sight of the other goal, which is to see what the long-term future of the pool is. He said they may need to talk with the new superintendent as he had mentioned this pool to him in meetings. He said the community has an appetite for a pool but is this the best solution. D. Brudney said when they conducted a survey in 2018/2019 all the respondents (91%) responded back by saying they wanted to keep a pool in Vermilion. K. Repola suggested getting the final numbers from the finance director and then after the first of the year they can reconvene the pool subcommittee to see how they can move forward. L. Elden suggested making the final pool numbers a part of their work session because it is a huge part of their budget. B. Malin thought in the next year or two there could be a new long-term plan and the success will be additional memberships. How can they market it to get to the point to cover the \$20,000 that is donated. K. Repola said the committee and the city need to make a commitment

to having a pool in Vermilion and decide how they are going to finance it in the future. She said these last two years they have had a beautiful pool when they were not sure it was going to happen.

West Pier Project: No report.

Public Art Subcommittee:

L. Elden reported the Public Art Subcommittee met last night and they still really want a location with the Main Street Beach. They are still in the planning stages, and they need funding, and they need to get the infrastructure in to figure out where their site is. They are concerned about a grant they received through Erie Shores and Islands, but M. Suszko encouraged them to apply for an extension and thought the body would be understanding. She said they have some ideas to incorporate public art with the parks department's help over the holiday season – possibly a family decorating an ornament type thing. They will collaborate with Marc to see if he can provide space in the downstairs of the old fire station.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Amy Hendricks explained there was \$14,150 remaining from the original donations in relation to the Sherod Park Playground and then there are commitments for \$17,000 in grants from a couple of organizations in Erie County, so she included this in the 217 Fund, then the balance was charged to the park bond fund as the committee had authorized up to \$100,000 from the bond last year, which is money that has to be spent within three years.

L. Elden MOVED; B. Malin seconded to authorize the purchase order of \$64,000 to install the playground equipment at Sherod Park, which will come out of Fund 510. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

L. Elden MOVED; B. Malin seconded to approve an expenditure of \$11,600 for the engineered wood fiber, which will come out of Fund 218. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Mayor Forthofer said he promised several constituents that he would mention the idea of an ice rink over by West Breeze Park. K. Repola said they can discuss this in the future along with Sand Volleyball and a Pickle Ball Court.

D. Brudney said if the police department builds where they intend to build, then it will remove their skate park. Mayor Forthofer said they intend to build the new police station to the south of the existing fire station.

ADJOURNMENT:

K. Repola adjourned the meeting upon no further discussion.

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday – October 18, 2022 @ **6:00 pm** at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street,
Vermilion

Transcribed by ~ Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk