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# PARKS, RECREATION AND CEMETERY BOARD MINUTES

April 22, 2025

Regular Meeting - 5:30 PM

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**1) CALL TO ORDER**

IN A REGULAR SESSION held on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 5:32PM in the Public Services Building, Training room, 900 S. Marshall, Marshall, MI 49068, the Marshall Parks, Recreation and Cemetery Board as called to order by Chair Robbins.

**2) ROLL CALL**

Roll was called:

Board Members Present: Jim Coury, Natalie Rector, Mitch Robbins, Zack Shippell, Kaeli Hill, City Council Liaison Jacob Gates

Absent: Jerry Underhill, Alex Culver

Staff Present: Park and Recreation Superintendent: Justin Miller, Deputy Clerk: Linda Urquhart, DPW Superintendent: Phil Smith

**3) APPROVAL OF AGENDA** - Items can be added or deleted from the Agenda by board action.

Motion by Robbins, supported by Coury, to approve the agenda as presented. On a voice vote: Motion carried.

**4) APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 25, 2025 MINUTES** - Items can be added or deleted from the Agenda by board action.

Motion by Chair Robbins, supported by Rector to accept the minutes of the February 25, 2025 regular meeting as presented. On a voice vote; Motion carried.

Emily Emersen-Rich indicated the correct spelling of her last name should be Emersen not Emerson.

**5) PUBLIC COMMENT** Persons addressing the board are required to give their name and address for the record when called upon by the Chair. Members of the public shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

None

**6) NEW BUSINESS**

**A.** Oakridge Cemetery tree diversity and signage.

Coury stated the cemetery has a lot of different tree species and, although there aren't funds, he would like to purchase approximately twenty or thirty signs to identify the trees. Also, the Rotary would like to plant ten or fifteen trees in the cemetery in the future, and would like Phil's help with the planting locations. Gates suggested requesting a grant from the Rotary to fund the project(s). Hill suggested asking the Boy Scouts or Eagle scouts if they would be interested in doing the project(s).

Robbins questioned the policy or process regarding permission for planting trees and or projects in the parks. There have been too many groups/people doing projects without permission. Miller indicated all projects need to come to the board(s) or be submitted in writing to him.

**B.** Greening of Marshall update.

Robbins indicated Greening of Marshall is an annual event put on by MACC, and is part of Earth Day. 50 trees are slated to be planted this Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 9:00 am. Volunteers will meet at Stuarts landing and complete the plantings by noon.

Ian Campbell, Chairperson of MACC, commented on the greening of Marshall. He indicated MACC will be performing the annual tree planting event in partnership with Ford and the City of Marshall. Volunteers are still able to sign up on their Facebook page. Rector inquired who funded the purchase of the trees. Gates responded that Ford donated \$20,000 toward the purchase and the City Department of Public Works ordered the trees.

Campbell requested the City post another tree survey request on the City Website, and also, post on the City Facebook, for future plantings.

## **7) OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Athletic Field expansion update. (Patronicity)**

Miller stated there is currently funding for the project. However, the City is applying for a patronicity grant, which is a \$50,000 match from MEDC if the City raises \$50,000. This amount is slated for the beautification of the project. The kick-off will be April 30, 2025, to break ground and raise \$50,000 in 60 days.

The project has been ongoing for over 4 years. The City has been trying to fundraise 2.2 million. The MEDC granted 1 million. Local businesses and banks have raised another \$600,000, the city put forward \$400,000 and \$100,000 from the rotary club. The project includes 6 pickleball courts, bathrooms, a new parking lot, splash pad, pavilion and shade sails.

### **B. Skatepark Renovation**

City council has earmarked \$50,000 towards the Skatepark Renovation project, and are in need of a \$50,000 grant from Cronin. However, the City is still waiting to hear from Cronin. The project will entail removing everything in the park, including the fence, and replacing it with new, updated equipment/materials. The park will look very similar to its current configuration. However, it should last another 25 years. Also, reopening the bathroom is a possibility. However, no indication when that will be.

The City will rename the park to All Wheels Park. If the Cronin grant is denied, the City will seek other opportunities for funding.

### **C. Riverwalk/DNR trustfund grant.**

The City submitted a DNR trust fund grant of \$200,000 with a \$200,000 match from the city. The grant was submitted on April 1, 2025. It's currently being reviewed, and the City should have an answer in December 2025, then they will need to wait another 6 months before proceeding. This is the second portion of Stuart's landing section, South Marshall River Walk.

The last portion was \$360,000. It takes a tremendous amount of money for the restorations which aren't in place. Moving forward, every project will allocate 10% of the total project budget to a dedicated maintenance fund at the planning stage. This ensures long-term sustainability and prevents funding shortfalls for upkeep.

## **8) RECREATION REPORT**

Justin indicated the summer programs are starting and the spring and winter programs are coming to a close. The numbers are phenomenal this year. The Daddy Daughter event was attended by 333 daughters with over 600 total attending. The Mother Son activity night is scheduled for Friday, April 25, 2025, with 133 sons registered. Baseball sign-up is currently ongoing. There are two travel teams, no tryouts are needed, and the fee is \$125.

The recreation department has implemented a new software program with Civic Rec through the City's platform-Civic Plus. Anyone registered with the old system must redo an account with the new system.

This spring Rec offered two pickleball leagues. The first session consisted of 14 teams and the second session had 20 teams.

This July, the recreation Department hopes to hire a part-time employee for approximately 30 hours per week. Drue Mullins will be taking a leave at the end of July and will return after three months. Once she returns, they plan to add more programs.

This summer, the Rec department is offering an outdoor soccer league for the first time. The program will be 6-weeks and held on the ballfields. They will consist of small teams with kids A in K-5th grade.

Coury questioned if the city would be initiating a kayak/canoe trip. Justin indicated he is planning it around Memorial Day. The City rents kayaks, canoes and tubes. Unfortunately, the City doesn't offer transportation for pick-up for people, only vessels. If participants need a return ride, they can call Dial-Ride for pick-up at Saylor's Landing, or they will need to obtain their own transportation.

Emersen-Rich indicated there is a kayak rental in Holt, similar to vending machines. Justin indicated he had someone contact him regarding this and he would investigate further.

## **9) PARKS REPORT**

Justin indicated there was a prescribed burn in the Brooks nature area. The burn took approximately 45 minutes and burned approximately 20 acres. He posted pictures on the City Website. Fredonia Township donated \$700 towards this project and Eckford township usually grants \$3,000 per year towards the parks.

Robbins mentioned there is a new trend going on in Michigan called Vernal pools. These are temporary pools where salamanders, box turtles, fairy shrimp and wood frogs live, and they are now being monitored. There aren't any recordings of these pools in Calhoun County. The pools aren't protected at this point, and it would be helpful to protect and map them.

Justin indicated the City plans to hire a part-time employee to mow grass and maintain garbage in the parks, except Brooks Nature, this summer, for approximately 30–35 hours per week.

Robbins asked if Justin was able to get a brush hog for the Ketchum Park Loop. Phil said he would get it schedule. Robbins would like to be involved again if possible and Phil approved.

Robbins indicated BK Cisma is authorized to come back to do a follow-up and treat the invasive species.

Robbins indicated he had heard the Rotary Club plans to do an event at Ketchum Park. Gates said they want to continue doing Waterways, same as what happened last year, and make it an annual event. Justin said he spoke with Marty Overheiser and informed him that anything done at the parks must first be approved by him or the Board.

Justin indicated Park and Rec will be hiring a full-time park employee this July. Qualifications include knowledge of plants, chainsaw usage, snow removal, and a passion and knowledge of parks. The starting wage is \$24 per hour with full benefits. Justin is awaiting approval by the Council, then the position will be posted sometime in May with a July start date.

Emersen-Rich suggested enlisting a volunteer coordinator to manage all the different park boards to avoid confusion. Justin indicated they tried to revamp the board over the years, but it never seemed to work as people fell off after the projects were completed.

Rector indicated there are official city parks, but there are also many green spaces in town that are not city parks. The city will still maintain the green spaces.

Justin was told there was a memorial tree at Ketchum Park that had died. He would like a new tree planted somewhere in the area.

Justin followed up on the skatepark bathroom at Ketchum Park, and stated that someone poured concrete down the toilet.

Justin indicated the park's bathrooms are scheduled to open on April 25, 2025.

**Cemetery report:** Phil indicated 5 of 6 seasonal employees started cleaning and mowing the cemetery yesterday. The cemetery is over 50 acres with 8,000 headstones.

Emersen-Rich interjected that there is a wildlife rehab facility in Marshall called Wildlife's Second Chance, that will take springtime babies that will become homeless, due to the upcoming tree cutting. Will Justin inform the contractors scheduled to do tree cutting.

## 10) BOARD REPORTS

None

## 11) ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Rector at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Linda Urquhart  
Deputy Clerk