

**CITY OF WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, MONTANA**  
**NOTES FROM PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S PARKS TOUR**  
**JULY 28, 2020**

**ACTION ITEMS**

Pattie Berg:

- Find out about swing set safety/why Rocky and the Mayor believe the set at Springs Park needs replaced.
- Status and location of land set aside for Fire Station? Committee wonders if Springs Park is the ideal location for a fire station... as compared to, for example, the area by the SCS office, etc.
- Talk with Connie Elsworth about:
  - Preferences for border for play areas
  - Ideas to better maintain BMX hill at Bair Park
  - General Maintenance needs?
- Is there a Written Parks Maintenance Plan?
- Is any employee a certified pesticide applicator?

Jen Frazer: Check with Lucy Zarr on Parks Master plan.

Carol Berg: Meet with Pattie Berg to prepare agenda for 8/10/20 meeting.

**Call to Order**

Committee Members Present: Jennifer Frazer, Kelly Huffield, Carol Berg,

Also present: City Crew members: JD Walker, Jake Gregory; Council liaison Pattie Berg

**Purpose of Meeting**

The purpose of this meeting was to tour the parks with a member of City crew responsible for maintenance, and to begin to assess the safety and needs of each Park. Jen Frazer came with copies of the Play Ground Report Card (see attached), and completed a good part of a Report Card at each place visited.

Prior to the tour, Pattie Berg had let the Committee know that the Council had returned the Parks budget to the previous year's level (\$60,500), and had asked the Committee to plan on moving forward with a tennis court update, and a skate boarding park.

- At various points during the tour, the group discussed some "universal" parks needs:
  - Where possible, the Committee prefers designating play areas as for younger, or older, kids, and planning appropriately.
  - At least one of the parks' swing sets should have a seat that can be used by disabled children.
  - The group recommended making at least one porta potty is available at each City park. The Committee noted that downtown business owners complain that people using Joanna's Park are using their facilities.
  - Jen Frazer had sent information about porta potty enclosures. The Crew said each one of these costs about \$10,000. The Committee wondered if something similar could be built, at a lesser cost. The crew said the cost of concrete would play a big part in the overall cost.
  - The Committee asked about the total cost of porta potties, and if they are paid through the Parks budget.
  - The Crew seemed to agree with the approach of providing porta potties with handwashing stations, like they have at the RAP festival ,

- There was a discussion about doing some kind of community interest/needs assessment. For example, what activities would you be interested in? What facilities/activities are you aware that we have? What activities do you currently participate in? If we offered BMX, skate boarding, etc., would you come? If there's no interest in a given activity, the City shouldn't spend money on it.
- The group then briefly discussed the status of Joanna's Park and Radar Park:
  - Another street light will be placed at Joanna's Park this summer.
  - Based on a map prepared by Jen Frazer, it appears the City's porta potties at Radar Park may be on Gudmunson's property. They either need moved, or the City may want to explore obtaining an easement for that purpose from the Gudmunsons.
- The group discussed a dog park, which was an idea raised at the last Council meeting. JD and Jake both said Connie Elsworth has been strictly enforcing the leash law, and while there is some poop to scoop, it isn't a big problem. Neither the crew nor the Committee indicated an interest in an off leash area, or a dedicated dog park. Concerns included more maintenance, and by opening this up, the City would encourage more violations.

In terms of Springs Park specifically:

- Merry Go Round and Teeter Totter: Bare wood is showing, concerns about splinters.
- Teeter totter: Install tire or something similar attached to, or placed below, each end to avoid crushing / impact injuries.
- The Committee questioned the overall safety of the big slide. It was felt it's likely it needs removed, or at least covered, so children can't get burnt when using it.
- The crew said Rocky and the Mayor believe the swing set is unsafe and needs replaced. The Committee wasn't sure why this set is any more/less safe than the one at Bair Park. Pattie is to follow up.
- "Rules of Play" should be posted.
- The surface under play areas needs brought up to standard (12" of loose material under play equipment.)
- The Committee discussed locating the proposed skateboarding facility in the most northwest part of the park. These can be noisy, so placing it away from residential districts is preferred. The BMX Park, if the City continues to have one, could be with the skate boarding, or at Bair Park. Or, the crew mentioned a privately owned lot that may be available for a combined facility.

The Committee and crew members then toured McStravick Court and Bair Park. Comments follow:

### **McStravick Court**

- Pattie briefly described the panelized court, which is an alternative to removal/replacement of the entire surface. If the Council/Committee agrees to move forward, a vendor would meet with the Committee and detail what must be done to prepare the Court for installation.
- The crew indicated that, with the installation of a culvert, a gravel parking area could be built on Jefferson Street. If that happens, the Committee would like to see a second door installed closer to the parking area. (This would also be nice for ball retrieval.)
- This parking area would be the most likely location for a porta potty.
- The chokecherry bush probably needs removed as it is pushing on the fence.
- The crew indicated the fence can be fixed.
- The steps from 4<sup>th</sup> need replaced, or removed and re-landscaped.
- As is the case with most concrete tennis courts, it is hot. Adding some kind of trees/bushes to the area could (eventually) cool the area off. This would require irrigation (maybe a drip system). A panelized system is cooler than concrete or asphalt, which would also help.
- Install benches and/or a picnic table outside the court for spectators, etc.

- Jen suggested that, rather than charge a usage fee, the City could install a “voluntary fee box.” She said studies have shown that, where fees are charged, the users take better care of the area, there is less vandalism and, therefore, reduced maintenance costs.

### **Bair Park**

- The surface under play areas needs immediately brought up to safety standards
- A couple of the seats on the swing set are starting to crack and probably need replaced.
- A decade ago, the Rotary had suggested installing a gazebo in the Park. The Committee needs to find out if this is still something they were interested in.
- The gophers are awful here, which creates maintenance and safety (ankle twisting) issues. The crew has set traps, but someone has to stay close, so users don't get hurt. Are there others ways to address this?
- Maybe add a young child's play area, which would allow kids of all ages to use the Park.
- The Committee wondered what the maintenance plan is for the area that is not developed:
  - The BMX hill is a weed patch: should it be removed, or built up into a sleigh riding hill, or???
  - This area may be a great spot for an adult work out area, a folf course, or just a walking path.
- Since she was not available today, Pattie is to check with Connie Elsworth about a preferred way to border playground areas, any suggestions she has for maintaining the BMX area, and any other feedback she has for Committee members.
- Is there a citywide parks maintenance plan? Pattie is supposed to follow up.

Please see enclosed playground report card for each park.

<b>Set Next Meeting Date/Time/Location</b>
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The next Committee meeting will be held on August 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m., at Springs Park. The goal of that meeting will be to identify any 'fatal flaw' items that must be immediately addressed, and to identify 'to do' items and a 'wish list' for prioritizing.

<b>Adjourn</b>
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People came and went as they could. The meeting ended at 12:17 p.m.