

PARK BOARD MEETING
December 2, 2020

Pursuant to due call and order, the Board of Park Commissioners, Dickinson Park District, met for a Special Meeting/Workshop at 4:45 pm, Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at Stark County Veterans Pavilion.

ROLL CALL: Present were Commissioners Scott Kovash, Tim Daniel, Scott Karsky, Jo Marie Kadrmas and Zach Keller. Also present were Executive Director James Kramer, Director of Recreation/Facilities Matt Mack, Director of Buildings/Grounds Craig Pearson, Attorney Randall Sickler and Clerk Leah Hoenke.

COVID-19 Update – Director Craig Pearson reported that the staff is using electrostatic sprayers focusing on touch points at West River Ice Center and West River Community Center along with his staff wearing masks at all times according to the mask mandate. Director Matt Mack then reported making changes when the Governor enforced the first mandate which made it to where all adult leagues were paused and would be rescheduled after December 14. If he extends it further we would cancel the league tournaments and seasons would be over as they stand now. He said adult basketball and curling were to start in December and we have pushed them both to start in January. The second week in January is when the majority of all adult leagues will start using WRCC and Armory. Futsal, basketball and volleyball will all sharing those two facilities and we'll have to schedule Sunday evenings to fit everything in. He also said we are trying to eliminate prime times at the community center so we aren't taking up prime space at WRCC. He said youth tennis lessons were postponed and have now been resumed. Open skate was cancelled for 2 weeks and picks back up this Friday with a 50 max capacity. He said individuals must reserve tickets online in advance, no walk-ins are allowed. Director Mack said that with the mask mandate at WRCC, we've had questions and he clarified that masks are not required while you are working out. The Jingle Bell 5K was turned into a virtual run with 33 people currently signed up. He said they are exploring other virtual things and there will be another Make and Take virtual class in December. He then touched on Dickinson Hockey Club and said they have no spectators or parents allowed, masks are required unless on the ice. No locker room use other than the high school teams. He also said the Dickinson Dolphins swim club has expanded their schedule to help spread out the swimmers. They follow the USA swimming guidelines on safe practices. They have spaced out practices and we have accommodated extra lanes for other swimmers. Executive Director James Kramer said this winter will be a challenge with the community center usually seeing its peak amount of people—we'll do the best we can. We don't have access to any other gymnasiums to accommodate our leagues so it will be a challenge. Commissioner Zach Keller asked about basketball league registration. Director Mack said there are 4 women's and 14 men's teams along with 4 old pro teams. He said women's are down 2 from last year and men's are down as well for various reasons but mainly because of covid. Commissioner Jo Marie Kadrmas asked if we've thought about keeping the center open past 8 on Sundays to accommodate. Matt said they haven't considered that but that it something that may make sense depending on what usage dictates.

Financial Overview – Executive Director Kramer said the 2021 budget has been completed and will start planning for 2022 in March of next year. He said the goal for 2022 is to continue simplifying chart of accounts; work to increase Capital Betterment to 5 mills by 2024, continue to review all Park District debt and will pay off the WRCC expansion to the City; and will research employee benefits to make sure we are getting the most affordable and quality providers. He then reviewed the Stark Development Corporation Economy at a Glance November 2020 report. He said he will start including this for monthly meetings because it is really good information. He reviewed the document that includes population and workforce information along with lodging, real estate, transportation and building permits. Director Kramer then reviewed the financial statement and said all funds combined revenue over expenditures, we are at \$187,000 with vast majority tied to community center, but that is all funds combined. Our issues with covid mostly affect the community center and not the general fund – that fund is doing ok. He said the community center is where we usually start turning to the profit side but this year we are at a negative of \$300,000. We are anticipating \$125,000 for the maintenance subsidy and \$250,000 for operational subsidy from the City. He said this is the first time we have asked the City for an operating subsidy. Director of Recreation/Facilities Matt Mack said we are seeing new members but not compared to what we are losing. He said we are down to 5800 members and from February have lost 1600 members. He said February 2020 was our highest memberships of all time. Director Kramer said we kind of got double blasted with covid and decrease in oil and he is hopeful we will see a lot of those members come back.

Project Overview – Executive Director Kramer reviewed the list of immediate projects which includes completing the Crooked Crane Trail, it is a costly connection to get that trail completed and said we have some little things to finish but for the most part the trail connection will be the biggest improvement to connect to the city. He said the lighting on the business loop walking bridge was through State and Federal funding and there are hopes to include similar lighting for other city trails. Friendship Park is also on the immediate list, hopefully will start in 2021. He said the group is waiting on a large grant that is needed otherwise the funds needed won't be there. Other projects on immediate list are the Police/Fire Park, disc golf course upgrades, skate park repairs, indoor/outdoor fitness space, tree plan, weed plan, infrastructure updates, drainage/maintenance

issues at HRGC and park sign replacement. Items completed this year were Kiwanis Park, kayak launch sites, tennis court resurface, park signage replacement and flooring upgrades at WRIC. He reviewed the list of high priority items which are a splash park, second dog park, playground renovation plan, irrigation replacement plan, and bleacher replacement at WRIC, ballpark seats, indoor pool renovation, trail master plan updates, golf maintenance shop, and leisure pool windows. The long range items include dehumidification in old ice rink at WRIC, additional ice/curling rinks, sports complex, city wide art beautification plan, future parks, ballpark turf replacement, south side Patterson lake picnic/park area, park maintenance shop upgrades, and hole #17 bridge. Director Kramer then reviewed the park playground installation spreadsheet showing the parks and when the playgrounds were originally installed and when they are due to be replaced along with the border replacement. He also showed the complex irrigation replacement and said the ballpark irrigation was replaced in 2020 and the WRCC pond area irrigation work will be taken care of in 2021. He showed the Park District Improvements map that we have identified the scope of work and are working on an estimate and will go out to bid after first of year. He said the initial estimate came in at \$1.2 million but the final number will be brought to the Board for approval. He said this will be the largest infrastructure work that is much needed. He said it is time to redo cart paths at the golf course saying we will start at each tee box and greens, those are worst areas as far as pot holes and water. They will curb and gutter around those areas and not do the trails. Director of Buildings/Grounds Craig Pearson said curbing will help take care of any nuisance water runoff – you can put drainage in and behind the curbing and that will clean up those areas immensely. He said number 4 is horrible, 5 is really bad as well and this will completely take care of those areas. He said his goal is to have continuous concrete cart paths, knowing it is a pipe dream but will be really nice. Director Kramer said we won't have enough dollars to do the complete project but doing the aprons first and then complete each year until it is all done – possibly do 2 holes each year. Director Kramer also reported that he was approached by the Downtown Association and they are planning for a splash pad and playground in their current downtown design and they have asked if we can contribute any dollars toward those projects and/or possibly take over the maintenance of those areas. He said the plans are absolutely beautiful and first class and said the playground area is the whole northeast quarter of that lot which also has a splash pad. He said these areas are becoming very common in cities. Director Kramer said there are some conflicts which are the playground, splash pad and bandshell which are directly competing against our facilities. Discussion followed on the size of the area. Commissioner Jo Marie Kadrmass said doing projects collaboratively is a good idea. President Scott Kovash said most likely the choice isn't of whether we are involved or not but as far as who is in charge of certain areas will have to be worked out somehow. Director Kramer said all the group is trying to do now is raise the funds for the project and they don't have any operational plans as of yet. Discussion followed.

Administrative Overview – James reviewed the Administrative Organizational Structure Plan that has been in the works throughout previous boards. He showed Phase I that was completed in 2018 which reclassified several positions. Phase I opened the Director of Buildings/Grounds position, reclassified Director to Executive Director, along with Finance Supervisor and Administrative Supervisor to Managers and adjusted base salaries which is an ongoing process. Phase II completed in 2019 opened the Director of Recreation/Facilities position, eliminated full time partially benefited classification and evaluated open positions. Phase III which is in progress includes the review of the Director of Business/Finance position for 2022, evaluate base salaries and future positions for January of 2021, eliminate the vehicle allowance and review the raise process. Director Kramer reviewed how we do the raises currently and said we give a cost of living raise and haven't really done any more. He said he talked to other organizations and said some give cost of living raises + merit raises. President Scott Kovash said he first thought about this when Bismarck parks and rec started a merit raise program. He said the biggest thing for him is that we need flexibility to give better raises, explaining that we need to be able to have the flexibility to offer that person a little more to stay with us. President Kovash said he asked James to compare other director salaries around the state. He also said during the oil boom we also had to reevaluate our salaries in order to compete in the job market. He said we've got the salaries pretty well in hand but when it came to comparisons to other park districts, we are still behind. He stated that we need the ability to be able to offer someone more in order to not lose a good employee. Commissioner Scott Karsky asked if we give an employee more does that get added to the next year. Director Kramer said it is dedicated to salaries only. Any money not used toward salaries gets carried over to the next year. He said it is up to the Budget Committee. He said other Park Districts have had years where they didn't use the merit raise money and other years when they do. He also said we haven't been compensating employees for added work duties and he thinks that is wrong. Commissioner Jo Marie Kadrmass asked about the base salaries. Director Kramer said the base salary doesn't necessarily mean that is what the salary is, it is just the base and does not include any benefits. Commissioner Kadrmass said benefits are significant and wondered what the percentage is for benefits. Director Kramer said he could get that information. Commissioner Zach Keller asked if other Park Districts have guidelines on how they protect themselves from any scrutiny regarding the money set aside for merit raises. Director Kramer said they don't have any rules written down but every dollar is accounted for. President Scott Kovash said he thinks we should be able to reward good employees and the way we do it now it is difficult to do that. He wanted to bring it to the Board and see what other members think about it. Vice President Tim Daniel said he agrees with Commissioner Keller that we want to make sure we cover our bases. Commissioner Kadrmass said she would feel more comfortable if the decision could come before the whole board and not just the President and Vice President. Commissioner Daniel said he agrees with that and we need to establish a written policy on how we do that. Director Kramer said it is a fund for merit raises that the budget committee would recommend a

percentage and the board would then approve as a whole. Commissioner Zach Keller said he thinks there would be very few situations on where he would feel comfortable making a decision on merit because he doesn't know enough on that level. Discussion followed. Attorney Randy Sickler asked if this is a one-time bonus that you only get for that year. Director Kramer said this is added to the salary and then has to be accounted for the next year's budget. Commissioner Keller asked what you do for additional work on employees due to a vacant position and then that position is filled, do you do a one-time increase that doesn't carry over. Director Kramer said that is a good point. Commissioner Keller asked if we have a solid index of comparisons for the rest of the positions. Director Kramer said we compare the 8 largest Park District's in the State and are compared against each other. He said that is hard because he believes it is more relevant to compare to more local organizations because that is who you are directly competing with. He said currently Dickinson is 6 or 7 on the list for salaries but those comparisons are hard because other communities have their own unique reasons for needing to pay their employees more. Director Kramer said he was hoping to start the conversation and then bring to the Board at a later date for approval. The Board's consensus is that it is a good idea to explore.

Director Kramer went on to review the current organizational chart. He showed the three departments of Recreation/Facilities, Business/Finance and Buildings/Grounds. He said there has been a need for a Deputy Director and that has been added to the Director of Recreation/Facilities. He said Recreation/Facilities Manager Ryan Nelson has put in his retirement date of May 2021 and he said they have decided to fill his position internally and then not fill the other position for 6 months in order to balance the budget. Same with the internal position of Facility Maintenance Manager will be filled internally and then the other position will not be filled for 3 months. He said we will open another Park Operations Specialist position that has been budgeted for but will not be filled immediately. Commissioner Keller asked if there is a plan to fill the Director of Business/Finance position. Director Kramer said right now as long as he is here, he is comfortable not filling that position because of his experience but if he were to leave that position may become more important. He said by leaving that position open we used half of that budgeted salary towards a maintenance position and the other position will be filled in 2022. President Scott Kovash said you never know and our Park District is growing all the time and that is one position that will be needed. More discussion followed. James went on to review a staffing assessment that showed in 2021 we will fill the Park Maintenance Specialist and hire an Assistant Golf Professional on an intern basis. He then reviewed the NDPHIT Conversion process. He said the month of December will be painful; we will have to pay the normal payment to NDPERS of \$34,000 and we have to make our NDPHIT payment of \$32,000 to join which is cash value in order to start the trust along with a regular January payment of \$32,000 that has to be paid on December 28, 2020. December of 2020 will look horrid on the financial statement but after that we will get caught up in 2021. NDPHIT has already come out and said all of the initial entities that started the trust will be locked in. He said we will let this ride in the insurance line item and so this year we will be over budget but next year we will be well under budget. He also said in December employees will also pay their new premiums and his suggestion is to initiate the 2021 raises as of December 1 of this year and then employees won't go backwards before their raise takes effect. President Scott Kovash said it amounts to just over \$2,000 to cover the raises in the month of December. President Kovash also said they were hoping that raises would have been better but due to the current situation the money isn't there. Director Kramer said last year we gave 2% and this year is a 2.5% raise.

Director of Recreation/Facilities Matt Mack reviewed a new part time longevity program that he would like to implement. This would be for part time employee's district wide that have worked 10 years or more that will be recognized at different milestones. He said for employees that have been employed for 10-14 years they will get \$100 visa gift card on their 10 year anniversary, certificate of appreciation and the option of a 10% discount for membership at HRGC and WRCC that extends to the employees immediate family or a 10 punch card that can be used at WRCC, HRGC and WRIC annually. He said that we don't have a lot of employees who qualify and it doesn't cost much to implement. President Scott Kovash said he agrees that it is a good plan. Director Mack said there needs to be the ability to use discretion if an employee leaves and then comes back, if it is beneficial to us there should be some wiggle room. President Kovash asked if they have to work a certain amount of hours. Commissioner Jo Marie Kadrmass said you could use her as an example, she is a group fitness instructor that the hours will not be the same as someone who works in another department. Commissioner Tim Daniel asked about part time officials. Director Mack said there are a lot of officials that come back season to season and they are included in this plan. Commissioner Kadrmass said this discussion started over a year ago because pay is always an issue, she said it would be nice to have an incentive for loyal part time employees. She said this is huge and employees want to feel valued and that their work is appreciated. Director Mack said he wanted to acknowledge Mary Steiner and Jo Marie who have worked with us for 20 years. President Scott Kovash said part time employees don't really get appreciated and they are a big part of what we do. Director Kramer said the vast majority do not stay past 4 or 5 years.

Executive Director Kramer reviewed the Patterson Lake preliminary boundary lines. He said the engineers are out staking now and he believes we will have some potential issues. He said this is one more step in the conveyance process and we need to be prepared for some possible hostility. He said there are cabins between 7, 8 and 9 that are in question among others as well. He said he will go out tomorrow to get familiar and give the Board an opportunity to get a feel for the lines as well. Discussion

followed. Director Kramer said we sent out the individual lots lines and gave them an opportunity to come in and go over their lots. He said he met individually with 28 of them and now this is the next step. Houston Engineering will be present at the next meeting. The final conveyance has not been signed yet, it is set to be held virtually signed next Tuesday and lots to be ready for purchases in March. He stated that the land was never the cabin owners land and that should lessen the tension but said some have lived there for over 20 years and so there is some sense of ownership. Director Kramer said the next hurdle will be the appraised values. Discussion followed on several areas that are public access areas that will now be gone and that there are a handful that are not interested in purchasing the land.

Executive Kramer then updated the Board on the Verizon cell tower lease agreement that we are paid \$1200/month over a 30 year period. He said other companies come in and offer to buy the lease and offer a lump sum payment which doesn't come out to be the same dollar amount over a 30 year period but the incentive is that you have the money upfront. Attorney Randy Sickler said there is potential that Verizon will not renew the lease. Director Kramer said they did pull out of the Gum Avenue location. Randy Sickler said the other issue is if the other companies sell space on the tower, you have to consider what the visual impact of that is. Director Kramer said he isn't recommending that we take a lump sum payment – he thinks it is better to take the \$1200/month for the 30 year period and stated we don't need the lump sum payment.

New/Old Business – Executive Director Kramer offered to the new Park Board members if they want to come in, one on one to review any history. He also thanked the Park Board for their time over the course of the year, we appreciate all the time that is put in as well as the staff. Commissioner Scott Karsky asked where we stand with the national award we were looking at. Director Kramer said for the CAPRA certification we won't apply until 2022 and the Gold Medal we will be applying in 2021. President Scott Kovash thanked everyone as well.

Adjournment – MOTIONED BY: Jo Marie Kadrmas; SECONDED BY: Tim Daniel to adjourn the meeting at 7:14 pm. Upon vote, all aye. Motion carried.

PREPARED BY:

APPROVED BY:

Clerk

President