

**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD***Wednesday, August 2, 2023 – 5:00 p.m.**Meadow Hills Golf Course Clubhouse***MINUTES**

**PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD (PRAB) MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rick Eriksen, Vice-Chairperson; Marty Tessmer, Mike Ely, Bobbie McClure, Bryan Taylor, Rosie Comet, Sarah Moll

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sydney Futrell, Robert Armstrong

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Brooke Bell, Director of Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department; Joe Sack, Manager of Recreation Services; Nicole Ankeney, Manager of PROS Planning, Design and Construction Division; John Wesolowski, Manager of Forestry and Parks Operations and Management Division; Dan Wickman, Manager of Golf Division; Suzie Jaquith, Administrative Supervisor

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** By Rick Eriksen, Vice-Chairperson, at 5:00 p.m.

**II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** The Agenda for the August 2, 2023, meeting was approved after a motion made by Member Ely and seconded by Member Comet.

**III. ADOPTION OF PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES –**  
The June 7, 2023, meeting Minutes were approved after a motion was made by Member Comet and seconded by Member Taylor.

**IV. BOARD DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS/REMINDERS**

- A. John Wesolowski, Manager of Forestry and Parks Operations and Management Division gave a presentation on The Benefit of Trees.
- Aurora is in the High Plains which consists of vast high plateau of semiarid grassland with cold winter and warm summers; Much wind and sudden and drastic changes in temperature; Low moisture causing soil to be light, shallow, and less organic. Plants that do well are those native to the area such as, Prairie grass, Forbs (Yucca and Prickly Pear), Deciduous trees (Cottonwoods) and Coniferous Evergreens (Ponderosa Pines).
  - Planting Program – The Forestry Division plants throughout the entire city on public properties, in parks and in front of single-family homes. Spring is the most advantageous time to plant so that the tree has the most time to establish before going dormant again. Fall also works well too, however, snowstorms can cause damage to the newly planted trees.
  - Forestry Division determines what species of trees to plant based on what will survive best in the Climate Zone 4-5. Some trees that have proven hardiest are Hackberry, Elm, Oak, Crabapple and Hawthorn, and Pine. Some other species that have been added the planting palette include Kentucky Coffee-tree, Chinkapin Oak, and Crimson Sunset Maple. Plants that have been tried and found not worthy are Pacific Sunset Maple and Royal Red Norway Maple. Currently Forestry Division is trying out the northern grown Pecan Tree which has shown promise so far.

*NOTE: By simple majority vote, Board may re-establish Agenda order. There is quorum with five members in attendance.*



- Environmental Benefits of Aurora's Urban Forest – Each year nearly 295 tons of nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and ozone are intercepted or absorbed by trees in Aurora. An average of \$0.26 per tree for a value of \$442,995.
- Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide Reduction – Annually, the tree resource directly sequesters an additional estimated 11,148.49 tons (gross) of carbon valued at nearly \$1.9 million.
- Aurora's urban forest is estimated to contribute to the avoidance of over 61.1 million gallons of stormwater runoff annually through the interception of precipitation on the leaves and bark of trees for an average of 3.9 gallons per tree. An average at \$.032 per tree for a value of \$551,373.
- Energy – Reduces electricity 11,092 Mwh and natural gas – 50,050 MBtu for a value of \$490,000 annually.
- Overall, the annual environmental benefit value of the Aurora's Urban Forest equates to nearly \$3.4 million.
- Member Comet asked if there is communication with Aurora Water to supply a list of recommended trees to plant. John Wesoloski replied, yes, the Forestry Division works closely with the Aurora Water Resources group to make sure the list is updated so is consistent throughout the city.
- Member Comet reported there are several pine trees that appear dead in Meadowood South Park, and asked if there is a specific issue with pines this year. John Wesoloski replied, an assessment of the trees would be needed to properly identify any issues. There is Pine Wilt Nematode that has been identified this year. Other environmental factors can be salty re-use water used to irrigate parks, dry conditions, and temperatures swings. He added, spruces suffer from tussock moth damage.
- Member McClure asked if the recently planted trees near Hoffman Park playground that had died, will be replaced. John Wesoloski replied, yes, in either fall or spring.
- Member Tessmer asked if Forestry had a clinical trial program for different tree species. John Wesoloski replied yes, trials have been done with Pacific Sunset Maple, Norwegian Sunset Maple, Crimson Sunset Maple, Espresso Coffee-tree, to name a few. Forestry Division is always looking at ways to increase the planting palette with a diversity of species and works close with several nurseries along the front range to find the most optimal trees.
- Member Eriksen asked if Forestry plants shrubs. John Wesoloski replied yes, in parks and along right-of-ways. John will send out a list of best shrubs to plant to committee members.
- Member McClure asked if there is a tree preservation policy. John replied yes, the goal is to have a net zero loss of trees. Developers have three options to choose from when developing a site. 1.) Preserve trees on site (preferred). 2.) Replace removed trees with an equivalence using a calculated formula. 3.) If it's not possible to plant trees on site, developer can pay into the tree preservation fund. These funds are then used to plant trees throughout the city.



- B. Nicole Ankeney, Manager of PROS Planning, Design and Construction Division, gave an update on the Memorial Bench Program.
- The Memorial Bench Program has been put on hold for staff to re-evaluate and develop a draft policy which will provide consistency and ensure costs for the program are covered. Over the last year, staff has noticed some challenges with manufacturing and increasing costs due to inflation. Last year, the cost to purchase a memorial bench, which includes site-work, concrete pad, and memorial plaque, ran around \$2,650.00. Currently, costs have exceeded that amount by \$800 to \$1,000. Due to the increase in costs, the program no longer supports itself. To keep the program viable, it is estimated the amount charged for a memorial bench will need to be increased by approximately \$1,000 for a total of \$3,650. This would be comparable to what other municipalities and park districts charge in the metropolitan area. Another solution being considered is to increase efficiencies by limiting the frequency of purchasing and installing benches to twice a year, similar to the memorial tree program. Staff are also conducting a GIS analysis to ensure opportunities to have benches located throughout the entire park system to benefit all park and trail users. Also being analyzed are current bench placements, condition of benches, and identifying specific bench locations that could be offered to interested parties during the selection process.
  - Member Ely asked if staff has learned of any design issues or policies from surveying memorial bench programs of other entities. Nicole replied, yes, for instance, a party may request to place a bench under a tree, however, the bench may interfere with the tree's root system. Limiting bench installs to twice a year and ordering materials only 2-3 times per year will save on staff time and shipping costs.
  - Member Tessmer asked if a memorial bench online form is available. Nicole replied, yes, however, the form is currently unavailable while staff evaluate the program.
  - Member Tessmer is concerned about the increased cost of the memorial bench program, and asked if staff had an idea of the number of interested parties that have changed their minds after realizing the cost. Nicole replied she will follow-up with staff for an accurate number.
  - Member McClure asked if existing benches could have memorial plaques installed on them as a cost saving measure. Nicole replied, staff are researching that as an option. The challenge is some benches are not configured for a plaque. Once the GIS analysis is complete and as parks are renovated, staff plans to have a bench standard in place to only order benches with an area designated for a blank plaque.
  - Member Eriksen asked if smaller, local contractors can be utilized for certain installs to decrease expenses. Nicole replied, the city must adhere to purchasing protocols but does have access to on-call contractors to pour concrete on an as-needed basis.
  - Member Eriksen suggested an "adopt a bench program".
  - Member Comet asked if staff has considered having concrete pads in several locations installed at the same time to save on costs. Nicole replied yes; however, the challenge would be having concrete pads sit for long durations until a bench has been ordered and installed.
  - Member Taylor asked how many memorial bench requests are received each year. Nicole replied, approximately 8 to 10 requests per year.



- Member Eriksen asked how many requests are currently in process. Nicole replied, she will follow up with an accurate number.
- C. Brooke Bell, Director of Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department and John Wesolowski, Manager of Parks Operations and Management Division, gave a PROS Update, including the latest on efforts to conserve water.
- PROS has always been a steward of water conservation and works closely with Aurora Water to spearhead those efforts.
  - The PROS department will be reclassified under the commercial irrigation program. A water allocation will be given monthly. If the department exceeds the allocation, Aurora Water will work with PROS to right size the use of water throughout the year. As with any commercial group, if water use continues to exceed allocation, water restrictions would be imposed, such as watering on a three days per week schedule, similar to residential properties.
  - Aurora was one of the first municipalities in Colorado to implement a computerized central irrigation control system. Over the years, this system has greatly evolved to now being able to program and detect irrigation use from a cellphone.
  - Reasons for seeing irrigation on in parks during the day could be due to several factors: A stuck valve, broken irrigation heads or staff troubleshooting/testing the irrigation system. Some parks have aging irrigation systems that are prone to mainline breaks.
  - Some strategies to conserve water include an upgrade to the centralized irrigation control system; replacement of master valves and backflows to meet technology standards of today; and populating a list of parks that are in most need of irrigation upgrades.
  - PROS is also converting an average of 22 to 25 acres of Kentucky Bluegrass to either native grasses or cold tolerant, Bermuda Grass called Tahoma which requires 2/3 less water than Kentucky Bluegrass.
  - Non-potable water is also used to irrigate many parks.
  - With this year's rainfall the irrigation was not turned on until July 1<sup>st</sup>, saving the department \$500,000 to \$600,000 in water costs.

## V. BOARD MEMBERS REMARKS

### A. Comments from Board Members

- Member McClure suggested a xeriscape be added to Freedom Park. Nicole replied, there are dedicated funds for this park and staff are waiting on Xcel Energy, in partnership with Public Works Department, to bury powerlines. A community outreach is also needed to assess the best amenities for the park.
- Member McClure asked if the city had a contact phone number for community outreach programs for residents in need of support. Nicole will send the city website link to Member McClure.
- Member McClure asked the board to consider bringing back ordering food for in-person meetings. Staff replied there is a food budget for boards and commissions meetings and if not used, the funds are repurposed back into the general fund for other city uses. Staff noted, some challenges in ordering food are the changing locations of



each meeting. Staff found in some cases, providing food often extended the duration of meetings. A suggestion was made to have a holiday dinner once a year in place of ordering food for every in-person meeting. It is ultimately the decision of the board through a majority vote. The board agreed to table further discussion for the September meeting.

- Joe Sack, Manager of Recreation asked the board to consider a location for the next in-person meeting on October 4<sup>th</sup>.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

- A. September 6, 2023 – WebEx Virtual Meeting
- B. October 4, 2023 – In-Person TBD

**VII. ADJOURNMENT** – Member Tessmer made a motion to adjourn, and Member Ely seconded. The motion passed at 7:50 p.m.

*R. A. Eriksen*

[R. A. Eriksen \(Sep 11, 2023 10:32 MDT\)](#)

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Rick Eriksen, Vice-Chair;  
Parks & Recreation Board

*Suzie Jaquith*

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Suzie Jaquith, Administrative Supervisor

ADOPTED \_\_\_\_\_





# PRAB Minutes AUG 2, 2023\_final\_JS\_BB

Final Audit Report

2023-09-11

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