

**CITY OF WIXOM
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, October 9, 2023
6:00 p.m. Wixom Community Center**

CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN:

ROLL CALL: John O'Brien, Chairman
Alicia Churilla
Lisa Ferrari
Tom Menzies
Shondra Okimura
Peggy VanSickle
Dan Williams
Jeff Winters

CITY STAFF:
Community Services Director: Deanna Magee
Parks & Recreation Supervisor: Kathy Venegas

Recording Secretary: Mona Freiburger

GUESTS: Christopher Nordstrom, Carlisle
Wortman Associates

Absent: Maryann Chupa

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

Quorum was met.

CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

No changes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION by Commissioner Menzies and second by Commissioner VanSickle to approve the July 10, 2023, minutes, as presented.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
Motion passes.

CORRESPONDENCE:

CALL TO THE PUBLIC: See Rules of Conduct listed at the end of Agenda.

None

TABLED MOTIONS

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Master Plan 2024 – 2029 Discussion

Mr. Christopher Nordstrom, Carlisle Wortman Associates, introduced himself and discussed the five-year Master Plan 2024 – 2029. The idea is for the Commissioners to review the plan and to make any comments, changes, and/or suggestions to be considered for the Plan.

The Master Plan 2024-2029 is included in tonight's packet for review.

Mr. Nordstrom indicated when the Commissioners are comfortable with the plan, the next step for this process is to put it out for public review for a minimum of 30 days. The public has 30 days to review the plan and make comments. It is also 30 days for the Commissioners to go through the plan. After the 30-day review process is completed, the plan will go to City Council and have a public hearing. After the public hearing, City Council can adopt it, reject it, or send it back for revisions.

Staff has been working on this plan since April, 2023. There was a very good turnout on the survey: Approximately 400 responses, which is outstanding. The responses from the community are typical.

The number one concern for everyone is to maintain the existing parks and recreation facilities such as having access to paths and trails. This was very high in the survey. With the Air Line Trail and the Lakes Community Trail, it brings this more to the forefront.

Things such as acquiring new parks and recreational facilities usually scores relatively low, and here, it was about 50% who said they would like to see more. Question 6 indicates the right amount of recreation properties; 65% said there is the right amount (page 99 in the appendices).

Mr. Nordstrom indicated he would go through what the community was saying and then go back to the recommendations.

Mr. Nordstrom stated protecting natural resources scored very high; access to facilities was in the middle, as was access to recreation programs which was a little disappointing. Then improving accessibility, ADA compliance.

Mr. Nordstrom indicated, generally, there are no real surprises on the satisfaction levels. He recommended to look at page 101, so the Commission could see how satisfied people were with the parks, and if they visited. The pie charts are a little bit disingenuous because if 25% is taken out who has never visited Mack Park, almost 60% that had never been there, satisfaction level is a little bit higher. One person commented about Mack Park, the shelter is gone, not understanding that the shelter is being worked on. There is room for improvement.

Mr. Nordstrom went onto page 106, where he indicated he tried to highlight the general topics brought up, but it was difficult to look at open ended questions and responses because you don't really know the intention on the response. Again, people want maintenance; playgrounds are a concern. They want more trails. There is a consistent pattern. Page 111, the one thing that comes out is the splash pad for numbers 1 and 2. The challenge with splash pads and pools is the operating costs. This is something that people are interested in and should be acknowledged such as to consider locations.

The types of activities and amenities they would like to see more of is on page 119: multi-use walking/bike trails; bathrooms; outdoor swimming pool, splash pad, rustic walking paths. One thing mentioned throughout was the general description of an indoor gym, more meeting space, and hinted at a recreational center. A recreational center is a massive undertaking, probably \$15 to \$20 million dollars to build a building, which doesn't include staff, maintenance, etc. Mr. Nordstrom suggested to develop a feasibility study to see the likelihood of building a recreation center. Mr. Nordstrom stated a lot of the recommendations here may never be implemented but we are showing that they are being heard. A feasibility study would predict costs.

Similarly, there is the question regarding the barn, and what to do with it. Mr. Nordstrom suggested to do a feasibility study. This was almost equally split where some people wanted to keep it, some people wanted to tear it down.

Page 123, Question 18, the question is, would you like to see Wixom's non-motorized system expanded? 71% said yes. Mr. Nordstrom thought it may be to fill in the gaps of the sidewalks and safety paths that are in place. Mr. Nordstrom suggested to possibly build a north/south access along Wixom then connecting to Novi because there are some plans there to build trails up to the Wixom border. This would be a great opportunity to have an access right downtown.

Programming: 51% said they take advantage of programs. This may be the special events in the summer time. There may be a better way to ask that question, not only do you participate but what do you participate in, exactly?

Chair O'Brien asked if this compares to other communities of the same size. Mr. Nordstrom answered that he has some communities with higher participation rates, but they have a dedicated recreation center with dedicated programs, in house.

Chair O'Brien asked if building a recreation center in Wixom would compete directly with Total Sports. When you compare other communities where you have that similar type, would you build something like that? Mr. Nordstrom answered, not exactly. Everywhere you go now, there are private gyms, yoga studios, etc., but it is unusual to have something as robust as Total Sports. Total Sports would also charge a lot more than a local community center. Mr. Nordstrom indicated one of the communities he works with is looking to partner with the YMCA; you build the facility and then share operating costs. Commissioner Menzies asked if there have been feasibility studies done if people would have thought differently knowing the costs of some of these things. Director Magee indicated Walled Lake Community provides a lot of programming which Wixom residents utilize. Supervisor Venegas asked if there is a way to project participation in a feasibility study; there is Total Sports, and Walled Lake Schools. Walled Lake Schools has a great community education program. Parks and Recreation disbanded the soccer program because we could not compete. Mr. Nordstrom answered yes, it

would be more on the survey and depends on the level in which you want to do. A statistically significant survey would be extremely expensive to offer. A robust outreach could be done to ask people their interests, and their comfort level as far as not only taxes but monthly dues to use the facility. Commissioner VanSickle indicated a very good point was made in doing a feasibility study because it says to the public that we hear them, but she did not think anybody wants to pay for it, either in taxes or membership fees. Commissioner Menzies asked how much a feasibility study costs. Mr. Nordstrom indicated a typical plan is approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 range.

Director Magee commented, basically, tonight is to review what the public said, what they are interested in and to at least recognize what the people that took the survey are looking for. We must at least explore the options. Mr. Nordstrom is including these items in the plan because in ten years, the community changes, Total Sports may not be there, and maybe that's a time to investigate this, and to look for grants.

Mr. Nordstrom stated the Commission does not need to make any decisions tonight, he wanted to let the Commission know how he approached some of the big-ticket items. Mr. Nordstrom indicated he tried to incorporate the highlights of the survey into the plan at various points.

Chair O'Brien asked what most people said about the Wixom Habitat. Mr. Nordstrom stated a lot of people indicated the Habitat needed more trails and pathways. There are several references to the old plan. From '97, shows a robust system of trails going through. Page 21, the '97 plan referred to the idea of having a nature study near the DPW yard. There were calls for a nature center in the habitat. Adding trails through here such as phase 2, 3 and 4 trails is a relatively easy process. The challenge is the areas are wet; boardwalk construction is expensive. Phase 2 may be the easiest one for you to accomplish at this point. There is a heavy emphasis on accessibility. ADA compliance has been in place since 1991, that at least 20% of your facilities must be accessible to everyone. The existing boardwalk has gaps where the wood hits the trail below; smooth that out. The overlook has a big step going down, which, obviously, is not accessible. It is probably a \$10,000 to \$15,000 project to get that all done. Then you can start looking at the other trails. The whole idea of a trail system is getting these loops to connect. Nature preservation was the second highest requested item in this plan.

Mr. Nordstrom suggested to have Pages 12 and 13 open at the same time. He indicated page 12 is the plan that makes a lot of sense. It suggests moving the barn over to Gibson, adding a bandstand and then being able to use that as an event center to rent the barn out for weddings, etc. Mr. Nordstrom stated to do a slight revision to the road, so that you have a loop that is easier to get in and out. Commissioner Ferrari questioned how many people wanted to move the barn, how popular was this item? Mr. Nordstrom stated it is where there was a 20/20/20/20/20 split. Commissioner Ferrari asked how much it would cost to build a new barn. Mr. Nordstrom indicated a new one could be built to look historic; use the stones from the wall to tie it all in. There are a lot of options. Basically, it is keeping the historic nature. A feasibility study should be considered.

Page 15, Gilbert Willis. Mr. Nordstrom discussed the parking lots at Gilbert Willis and Gunnar Mettala. He suggested to repave and restripe the lots, which would be an expensive proposition. It would be a long-term goal. On the east side of the property, he suggested to connect the Lakes Community Trail, paving the east path to the standard 8- to 10-foot-wide path half way.

Director Magee stated Wixom has already been in conversations with Commerce regarding the trail and the cost sharing for footage to put in there. It is the process to do that connectivity. It is determining when, but we've already got cost sharing depending upon the footage.

Mr. Nordstrom stated with all the parks, the emphasis was on making sure that all the amenities are connected and that they are accessible which includes an asphalt path, adding pavement around the bleachers and the ballfields. Lawn is not considered accessible. The center shown with the red zig zag line, there are two paths right in the middle which are steep and eroded. The zig zag shows the footprint, if you were trying to make this a 5% slope to meet ADA requirements.

There was a suggestion to add picnic shelters. Up on the north side, adding a structure for 2- to 5-year-olds; then also adding something for ages 13 and up such as a ninja course or zip line, etc.

The last two things Mr. Nordstrom suggested is on the southeast side, to possibly adjust the disc golf course slightly to have some playing fields in there. Then, in general, add more trees to preserve nature.

Page 17, Gunnar Mettala, Mr. Nordstrom indicated this is the same kind of concept and suggested the idea of repaving. He indicated there is a possibility of a road connecting through to the west. It would take some reconfiguring. Mr. Nordstrom discussed adding playing fields to the east side, but the concern is that it is pretty wet. It could go back to nature which is a very legitimate option or excavate down and put in a couple of detention basins over there using the spoils from the basins to raise the field area. Director Magee indicated this is extremely expensive. Otherwise, it is just adding more pathways. There is a lot of interest in seeing paths going through the woods; again, using crushed limestone. Mr. Nordstrom suggested upgrading the existing play equipment, upgrading the restrooms, then adding a fitness station right in the center circle area of the driveway; then planting trees.

Director Magee indicated they are already in the process of writing specifications for the replacement of comfort stations as well as installation of the large pavilion and a small trailhead pavilion by the trailway. The pickleball courts, the contractors should have started today. They are doing the Gibson back parking lot to complete the park as well as converting those courts to eight pickleball courts. Some of the things that Mr. Nordstrom put in the plan have already worked into the capital long range plan. Mr. Nordstrom indicated he did update this in the plan.

Mr. Nordstrom stated the one thing that was interesting for Gunnar Mettala, this was the lowest rated park. There were a lot of concerns about safety. If the road did go through, this may improve things because you have more eyes on the park, people know what's going on and you're not tucked back and away. Mr. Nordstrom suggested possibly security cameras, more for the police department to have, and/or ask for more patrols to go through there. Supervisor Venegas asked if lighting, safety path lighting, could be installed. With the usage of the pickleball courts, there will be more people there, and incidents could be less.

Mr. Nordstrom indicated on page 22, Mack Park, there was not much to say there. Wixom Civic Center campus was the idea of upgrading the landscaping, installing a couple of seating areas along the pathway, evaluate the feasibility of a new water feature and/or splash pad.

Page 25, Mr. Nordstrom discussed the trail plan. There is a dotted blue line, which is north/south connector to Lakes Community Trail. These are filling in the gaps in the existing safety path network. The Big R on the right side next to Wixom Christian School, that's the utility corridor; utility companies are hard to work with but there have been enough instances where he has seen a pathway going through the corridor, which is worth the discussion.

Director Magee stated they have had some discussions and there are some people in Novi that are looking to promote the corridor going through the ITC Trail. There haven't been any dollars or talks of commitment, but the discussions have been there.

Mr. Nordstrom stated there are two things for the Commission to think about tonight: A, are you comfortable with putting this out for public consumption for comments with the idea being that you have 30 days to also make decisions; and B, Is there anything that jumps out that you absolutely do not want or absolutely want?

Commissioner Menzies stated this information is overwhelming without Mr. Nordstrom explaining and going over the plan.

Director Magee stated if there are any comments, suggestions and/or questions to submit them to either Mr. Nordstrom or herself.

MOTION by Commissioner VanSickle and second by Commissioner Menzies to approve Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as presented.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
Motion passes.

2. Approval of 2024 Meeting Schedule

- January 8, 2024
- April 8, 2024
- July 8, 2024
- October 14, 2024

MOTION by Commissioner Menzies and second by Commissioner Winters to approve the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Schedule, as posted.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
Motion passes.

3. Gibson Parking Lot Paving and Gunnar Mettala Pickleball Courts

Director Magee commented between these two projects, it is about \$370,000. The Gunnar Mettala courts will be approximately \$200,000 and approximately \$172,000 on the Gibson parking lot but concludes and finishes that section of Gibson parking lot. They are both good projects and we should see them completed soon. Striping will not happen until Spring.

4. Mack Park Pavilion Update – Foundations & Footings installed week of October 6

Director Magee indicated the foundation footings was started last week; if the weather holds, we might see the pavilion installed, but, if not, it will be on the agenda for the first part of spring, 2024.

5. Tot Lot Playground Project DDA budgeted \$250,000 towards the project for 2023-24

The DDA budgeted \$250,000 towards the project. The City will commit approximately \$75,000 of block grant funding. There is a good budget to work through for the playground for 2024, late spring.

6. Review of Events

- BBQ & Blues

Supervisor Venegas commented the BBQ & Blues turned out absolutely awesome. Theo Gridiron was very good for the event.

- Concerts

Supervisor Venegas indicated the concerts were more successful than ever, even weather considered, every night, even if it was raining or cleared up right before, we learned at those events, we cannot call it off. It rains, and then 15 minutes later, the sun comes out and there are 500 people. It was a great concert season.

- Movie in the Park

This event was very well attended and successful.

- Barkin in the Park

Supervisor Venegas commented this event was very fun this year, and the weather was good. The sponsor, Premier Pet Supply in Novi, had very nice prizes. First place was \$250 bags worth of pet supplies and 2nd place was \$100 worth of pet supplies for both contests which was the Pet Talent Contest, 1st and 2nd prizes; and the pet costume contest, 1st and 2nd prize. There was a lot of participation from the community.

7. Upcoming Events

- Fall Fest – October 14 – The weather forecast is not looking good, and some decisions will have to be made.
 - Tree lighting – December 1
8. Disc Golf Course Phase II

Director Magee commented the holes for Phase 2 have been cleared and identified. Next Spring, we are going to be looking at installing signage for each hole as well as the concrete tees.

INFORMATION:

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Director Magee questioned the Commission in reference to the barn, where they stand, so that she can make a recommendation to City Council. The options are: 1, move it to Gibson Park; 2, tear it down; or 3, do nothing. Based on Mr. Nordstrom's comments, it may be less expensive to build a new barn than to move it.

Director Magee stated the historical society does not have any money for the barn to be restored. If the barn is torn down or moved, the property would be used for economic development. There is some history and a write up on the barn, Hopkins Barn. The historical society says if the barn is moved to Gibson Park, it loses its historical significance. Commissioner Okimura suggested to use portions of it in a new structure, which would be a good way to honor it.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Director Magee asked the Commission if they were comfortable accepting the Master Plan as is with amendments to be considered in the future, possibly. Commissioner VanSickle suggested to take out the part regarding the disc golf adjustment. Commissioner Menzies commented it is going to be interesting to see the comments when this is distributed and at the public hearing.

Director Magee thanked everyone for attending this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION by Commissioner Menzies and second by Commissioner VanSickle to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.

Motion passes.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

OCTOBER 9, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary