

OWOSSO

Parks & Recreation Commission



Regular Meeting
6:00pm Monday, July 28th, 2014
City Council Chambers
Owosso City Hall

AGENDA
Parks & Recreation Commission
Monday, July 28, 2014--6:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers
301 West Main Street
Owosso, MI 48867

Call to order:

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll call:

Approval of agenda: July 28, 2014

Approval of minutes: June 23, 2014

Public comments:

Communications:

1. Staff memorandum
2. June 23, 2014 minutes

Business:

1. Ice Rink update
2. Sledding Hill safety concerns at Holman Grove
3. Park hours – in park rules and regulations – should it be an ordinance?
4. Volunteers helping at Dog Park and around town
5. Trail maintenance at Collamer Park (Kiwanis trail)
6. Handicap/wheelchair swings
7. Vandalism at various parks – volunteer group – community involvement

Discussion:

1. Promoting Active Communities submitted on July 15th – Should receive a Bronze award, will find out in the fall
2. www.activeshiawassee.com is up and running thanks to the hard work and dedication of three Owosso Fellows, Mary Shi, Chloe Larkin and Courtney Crawford, through the Cook Family Foundation. Check the site out!

Public comments:

Adjournment: Next meeting will be Monday, August 25, 2014

The City of Owosso will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audiotapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/ hearing upon seventy-two (72) hours notice to the City of Owosso. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the City of Owosso by writing or calling the following: Amy K. Kirkland, City Clerk, 301 W. Main St, Owosso, MI 48867 or at (989) 725-0500. The City of Owosso website is: www.ci.owosso.mi.us



MEMORANDUM

301 W. MAIN ▪ OWOSSO, MICHIGAN 48867-2958 ▪ WWW.CI.OWOSSO.MI.US

DATE: July 22, 2014

TO: Chairman Espich and the Owosso Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Susan Montenegro

RE: Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting: July 28, 2014

The Parks & Recreation Commission shall convene at **6:00pm on Monday, July 28, 2014** in the city council chambers of city hall. This is a regular meeting, and there will be a planning commission meeting following this meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Items to be discussed at this meeting are:

1. Ice Rink update
2. Sledding Hill safety concerns at Holman Grove
3. Park hours – in park rules and regulations – should it be an ordinance?
4. Volunteers helping at Dog Park and around town
5. Trail maintenance at Collamer Park (Kiwanis trail)
6. Handicap/wheelchair swings
7. Vandalism at various parks – volunteer group – community involvement
8. Promoting Active Communities submitted on July 15th – Should receive a Bronze award, will find out in the fall
9. www.activeshiawassee.com is up and running thanks to the hard work and dedication of three Owosso Fellows: Mary Shi, Chloe Larkin and Courtney Crawford. Check the site out! This is a site that will help promote healthy activities people can do throughout Shiawassee County, including Owosso!

If you have any other updates or new information before the meeting, please send it along to myself and the commission. You can call me on my cell phone at 989.890.1394 or email me at susan.montenegro@ci.owosso.mi.us with any questions or concerns you may have.

Please RSVP! See you on the 28th!

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission
Council Chambers, City Hall
June 23, 2014 – 6 p.m.

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chairman Espich.

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

Roll Call: Taken by Recording Secretary Marty Stinson.

Members Present: Chairman Michael Espich; Vice-Chairman Jeff Selbig; Commissioners Tim Alderman and Nikki Hathaway.

Members Absent: Commissioner Kristen Woodbury.

Others Present: Ms. Susan Montenegro, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development; Ms. Mary Shi, a graduate from Yale University and a Cook Foundation Owosso Fellow.

Approve Agenda for June 23, 2014 meeting:

A motion to approve the agenda for June 23, 2014 meeting was made by Commissioner Hathaway and supported by Commissioner Alderman with the addition of a business item requested by Rick Morris regarding the Skateboard Park.

Ayes: all. Motion carried.

Approve Minutes from May 23, 2014 meeting:

A motion to approve the minutes from the May 23, 2014 meeting was made by Commissioner Alderman and supported by Commissioner Hathaway with one correction that Liam Hathaway thought the parks were “pretty good”.

Ayes: all. Motion carried.

Public Comments: None

Board Comments:

Ms. Susan Montenegro, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development, introduced Ms. Mary Shi, a graduate from Yale University and a Cook Foundation Owosso Fellow.

Chairman Espich asked about the status of the Bark Park clean-up. Commissioner Selbig stated that it is cleaned up and mostly just needs trimming along the fence. The Chairman has a weed whip if someone will hold up the fence as it is worked on, he could do it. It was also suggested that a pet friendly grass killer be applied at the fence line.

Ms. Montenegro has not heard from anyone about the disc golf. Chairman Espich suggested that no decisions be made at this time. Mayor Frederick is talking with some people about the cemetery property.

Discussion about the possible \$5,000 expenditure line item for the Parks and Recreation Commission netted that it would still have to be approved by council to be disbursed. The commission understands

that, but still would like some discretionary funds. An example would be to direct some money towards the disc golf installation at Rosevear Park.

Ms. Montenegro noted that the check has been issued to Mr. Daniel Vargas for the bike rack, but it has not been installed yet at Bentley Park. Chairman Espich will follow-up on that.

Communications:

1. Staff memorandum
2. May 27, 2014 minutes

Business:

1. Promoting Active Communities (PAC) Assessment Update

Chairman Espich noted that he, Commissioner Woodbury, and Ms. Montenegro met and worked on this assessment. Ms. Mary Shi also worked on it as well. It should be done before July 15. Ms. Montenegro noted that the last self-assessment was in 2009 when the city got an award.

Ms. Shi continued that Shiawassee County is becoming a “Shining Star” and can be a check mark on future grant applications.

2. Skate Park Pad

Commissioner Alderman stated that he received an e-mail from Rick Morris. The city installed a skate Park with ramps and jumps. Per Mr. Morris, the ramps have sunk into the asphalt and are dangerous. The Iron Wheels Club is willing to donate funds towards fixing this if the city will tear out the asphalt and install concrete instead. A construction company was mentioned that will donate the labor and a company was mentioned that will donate the concrete at cost. The Iron Wheels wants the Parks and Recreation Commission to recommend to the city to tear out the asphalt and install the concrete. Commissioner Alderman has no opinion; he is just conveying the message. The Iron Wheels have about \$5,000 to donate and they are tired of the situation.

Chairman Espich recalled that about two years ago, Rick Morris stated the same to Mr. Zettel at a 50% co-pay situation. Ms. Montenegro said she could look into the situation to see if they can get further funding. She would also check into the liability. She also mentioned looking into other locations to help keep the skateboarders away from the downtown area.

Chairman Espich noted that the Iron Wheels and Mr. Morris should be aware that the Parks and Recreation Commission is only an advisory group.

Motion by Commissioner Alderman, supported by Commissioner Selbig to recommend the city develop a plan to make the skate park safe with a contribution of labor and material as soon as possible using funds from the Iron Wheels with matching funds from the city and the skate park is to be inspected immediately by the city for safety.

Ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Safe Routes 2 Schools Discussion

Ms. Mary Shi discussed this federal program to encourage bike, walk and roll to school. This program offers funds for infrastructure such as sidewalks and non-infrastructure such as education about road rules for six schools in the community. This is a year long application project with construction taking up to three to four years.

Commissioner Alderman thinks this is a terrific program. Right now you see so many people on bikes not riding them correctly in traffic. The education piece is important.

Ms. Shi said it will be educating the community also. Ms. Montenegro said this is about \$1.25 million in infrastructure which can also assist others than just students in the community. Ms. Shi has spoken with the RESD; school principals; Mike Ash; Ms. Montenegro and others to establish a committee. The process from grant submission to acceptance will take about three months. Ms. Montenegro noted this is not a competitive bid. The regional coordinator will work with the city to help make it the best “rolling” grant.

Public / Board Comments:

Ms. Montenegro noted that there were some problems with the new splash pad with kids trying to pack mud and sticks into the spray nozzles. The city is now trying to create an agreement with the YMCA to have them oversee and check the splash pad daily.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Alderman and was supported by Commissioner Selbig. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Ayes: all. Motion carried.

mms

Susan Montenegro, Secretary

CITY OF OWOSSO
PARK RULES AND REGULATIONS
2014

AUTHORITY. These rules are promulgated pursuant to the provisions of Section 21-1 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Owosso, Michigan.

APPLICABILITY. These rules apply to City of Owosso parks, play fields, and other public grounds, hereafter called parks.

CLOSING HOURS. Parks shall be closed to public use between dusk and dawn, except as follows: 1) Bentley Park, Grove Holman Park (for sledding only), Bennett Field and Rudy DeMuth Fields shall be closed from 11:00 p.m. to dawn, and 2) Hopkins Lake Park shall be open between dusk and dawn for fishing in Hopkins Lake.

SWIMMING PROHIBITED. Swimming is prohibited except in designated areas.

FIRES. Fires are restricted to barbecue grills and then only for preparing food.

PROPER DISPOSAL OF REFUSE. Refuse generated during park activities shall be properly disposed of in containers provided for that purpose. Disposal of household refuse in park refuse containers is prohibited.

VEHICLE REGULATIONS. 1) Motorcycles, mopeds, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, and the like are prohibited from all park areas except for roadways designated for public travel in accordance with state and local laws, 2) The speed limit in all parks shall be ten miles per hour, 3) Parking shall be restricted to areas designated for that purpose, 4) and no person shall operate a motorboat on Hopkins Lake in the city. "Motorboat" is any vessel propelled by any machinery other than an electric motor, whether or not the machinery is the principal source of propulsion.

PAVILION RESERVATION. Picnic pavilions shall be available on a first-come, first-served basis on the day of use except as follows: Advanced reservations will be taken for each calendar year for the pavilion in Bentley Park and Harmon Patridge (Green Meadows) Park. Reservations will be taken beginning January 1.

ALCOHOL USE. Alcoholic beverages shall be prohibited in all parks.

SMOKING. Smoking is strongly discouraged in the city parks. Smoking is prohibited in areas of concentrated use, such as bleacher seats, dugouts, play equipment, and pavilions, if posted.

DOGS. Except as described in the Dog Park section below, dogs shall be leashed and kept under reasonable control at all times.

FIREARMS AND WEAPONS. It shall be unlawful for any person to carry on his or her person or in the passenger compartment of any motor vehicle any dangerous weapon, including but not limited to, segments of chain, hunting knives, jackknives having one (1) or more blades which exceed three (3) inches in length, club, metal pipe, or any other dangerous weapon, unless carried in the normal course of a business or profession, excluding firearms. It shall be unlawful for any person to discharge any firearm, air rifle, air pistol, bow and arrow, sling shot or wrist rocket within the city unless part of an exposition, tournament or range under adult supervision after issuance of a permit by the police department.

USE BY ORGANIZATIONS. Shiawassee County-based organizations shall be permitted the exclusive control of designated areas of city parks, including control during hours the parks are closed to the public, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Approved by the city manager or his/her designee;

- 2) Areas used shall be those not regularly frequented by the public or the areas occupied shall be open to the public; although a fee may be charged for such access;
- 3) The organizations' use of the park area shall not violate any local or state law nor unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of adjacent park areas by others;
- 4) The organizations shall hold the City harmless from liability for incidents arising out of the organizations' use of the park area and shall provide evidence of insurance coverage;
- 5) The City reserves the right to direct where organizations' structures are installed and activities conducted to minimize damage to park property and facilities and to limit interference with the use of adjacent areas of the park.

SCHEDULING AND USE OF ATHLETIC FIELDS.

- 1) Priority in the use of ball fields, soccer fields and similar athletic facilities in City parks shall be given to organizations scheduling regular games or matches. When the city manager determines that coordination of organizations' use of such facilities is necessary to avoid scheduling conflicts, he or she shall provide for the development of schedules for such facilities. The city manager shall have the authority to designate organizations to provide for scheduling and oversight of use of athletic fields. Such organizations shall schedule use of the fields in a way that accommodates use by all interested organizations to the greatest extent feasible and to provide for compliance by these rules and regulations by all organizations using the athletic facilities.
- 2) The city manager shall have the authority to restrict use of athletic fields to avoid excessive wear and tear on facilities.
- 3) The city manager may authorize organizations to sell concessions at athletic fields and to use City facilities designated for that purpose. Preference in selling concessions may be given to organizations designated to provide scheduling and oversight of the use of athletic fields. Organizations selling concessions at athletic fields shall be responsible for the cleaning of restroom facilities at such fields.
- 4) Organizations providing for the scheduling and oversight of athletic fields may be permitted to provide for the installation of signs recognizing program sponsors. Such signs shall not advertise specific products or services but shall be limited to the names and logos of sponsors and brief descriptions of the nature of the sponsor's business. All sponsor signs shall be constructed of material that will withstand customary weather conditions and shall be maintained by the organizations installing them. Signs shall be installed on existing fences so that the message content of the signs is visible from within the athletic fields only. Signs shall be installed only during the usual seasons during which organizations schedule games and matches on the fields.
- 5) Organizations using athletic fields for scheduled games, matches and practices shall be responsible for removing litter from the areas used for their activities. In addition, organizations shall be responsible for removing and storing any equipment used in their activities. Installation of bleachers or similar facilities must be authorized by the city manager or his/her designee.
- 6) The city will provide utilities (except for telephone service), refuse disposal and the maintenance of athletic fields in coordination with the needs and schedules of organizations using the fields. Organizations using athletic fields that undertake specific activities uniquely required for their particular use of the fields such as the installation of bases or nets, the painting of lines on fields, etc. require prior approval.

DOG PARK REGULATIONS. Within the designated dog park area in Collamer Park, dogs are permitted under the following regulations. Elsewhere in the city, the city code applies.

- 1) All dogs must be leashed in the dog exercise area parking lot.
- 2) Any person bringing a dog or dogs to the dog exercise area must have one leash per dog.
- 3) There shall be no more than three dogs per person allowed in the dog exercise area. Any person bringing a dog or dogs to the dog exercise area must have at least one dog feces waste bag per dog in his or her possession and must remove any feces deposited by the dog(s) in their care.
- 4) Persons under sixteen years of age visiting the dog exercise area must be accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian or other responsible adult with permission of the parent or guardian.

- 5) No persons under sixteen years of age are allowed in the dog agility area unless accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian or other responsible adult with permission of the parent or guardian.
- 6) Each dog shall always be under visual and voice control of the owner or other responsible person at least 16 years of age.
- 7) All dogs must have current vaccinations and licenses and shall wear a collar with tags as proof thereof.
- 8) Aggressive dogs, as defined below, are not permitted in or around the dog exercise area, including but not limited to, the parking lot. Owners or other responsible persons will be held legally responsible for any injury caused by a dog that they bring in or around the dog exercise area.
 - An aggressive dog means:
 - a. A dog that bites a person. However, a dog shall not be considered aggressive if the dog bites a person wrongfully assaulting the dog or the dog's owner, or if the dog bites a person after being provoked by that person.
 - b. A dog that injures or kills another domestic animal without provocation while at the dog exercise area.
- 9) Female dogs in heat are not permitted in or around the dog exercise area including, but not limited to, the parking lot.
- 10) Dog owners or other responsible persons shall provide dogs with drinking water while visiting the dog exercise area when weather conditions require.
- 11) Dog owners or other responsible persons shall not keep dogs enclosed in a vehicle during hot weather which may cause injury to the dog.
- 12) Any person having knowledge of a dog having bitten, scratched, or injured a person or other animal within the dog exercise area, including but not limited to the parking lot, shall report the incident to the police department.

COMMUNITY GARDENS. Community gardens, as designated on public lands, whether leased or available to the public, shall operate with the following regulations.

- 1) Garden uses must complete the community garden individual waiver as provided by the city.
- 2) Work on plots must begin within 10 days after the garden has been tilled, if applicable.
- 3) No synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides or insecticides are to be used.
- 4) Work on gardens may only occur between dawn and dusk.
- 5) No mechanized equipment may be used before 9:00 A.M.
- 6) Gardens must be kept free from weeds, rotten produce, and plant debris.
- 7) Stakes, plastics, and garbage must be disposed of in a timely manner.
- 8) Shared paths between garden plots must be maintained without digging into the main paths; such paths must be kept free of toxic materials and rocks.
- 9) Children must be supervised.
- 10) Headphones must be used to listen to the radio or other portable sound equipment.
- 11) All crops must be legal, non-toxic, and non-hazardous.
- 12) Other plots and gardens are not to be damaged or harvested by other users.
- 13) Sales of produce and other products at the garden or in the park is strictly prohibited.
- 14) No tires are allowed at the garden site.
- 15) No pets are allowed at the garden site.

SKATE PARK RULES. This is a use-at-your-own risk facility. This facility is non-supervised. Skating, blading and biking are high risk/hazardous activities. By participating you accept that risk and agree to not hold the City of Owosso or its employees responsible for any injuries incurred as a result of use.

- 1) The use of motorized equipment or other wheeled vehicles is not permitted.
- 2) The use of proper protective equipment, including helmets and knee, elbow and wrist pads is strongly recommended.

- 3) Use of the facility is prohibited when wet, rainwater is present or park maintenance is being performed.
- 4) Graffiti and tagging are strictly prohibited and may result in the removal of offenders from the park and police action.
- 5) Additional obstacles and/or materials are not allowed at this facility, such as (but not limited to) homemade ramps, boxes, picnic tables, etc.
- 6) Spectators are not permitted on the ramps.
- 7) Glass containers are prohibited.

SPLASH PARK RULES. The City of Owosso intends to provide seasonal access to a splash park, to be used at-your-own risk. "Splash Park" is defined as the area upon the concrete pad or access sidewalks.

- 1) All persons using the splash park do so at their own risk.
- 2) Children under 12 years of age must be accompanied by an adult (18 years or older), and must be supervised by that adult at all times.
- 3) Running, undue roughness, horseplay, and other undue disturbances are strictly prohibited.
- 4) Splash Park is designed for recreation purposes and not for bathing. Soaps, detergents, shampoos, and other chemicals or cleansers are prohibited.
- 5) Climbing or playing on components is not permitted.
- 6) The City of Owosso is not responsible for lost or stolen articles.
- 7) Infants must wear swim diapers or rubber pants without diapers. Cutoffs and street shoes are prohibited.
- 8) Wheeled vehicles, except strollers, walkers and wheelchairs, are not permitted in the splash park area.
- 9) No animals, except for service animals, are permitted in the splash park area.
- 10) Radios and other acoustical devices are only permitted when used in conjunction with personal headsets.
- 11) Pool toys and floats are prohibited.
- 12) No glass containers of any kind are permitted. No drinks, gum, or food of any kind are permitted.
- 13) The use of profane language will not be tolerated.
- 14) Persons with sore or inflamed eyes, colds, nasal or ear discharges, boils or other acute or obvious skin or body infections, or cuts shall be excluded from the splash park.

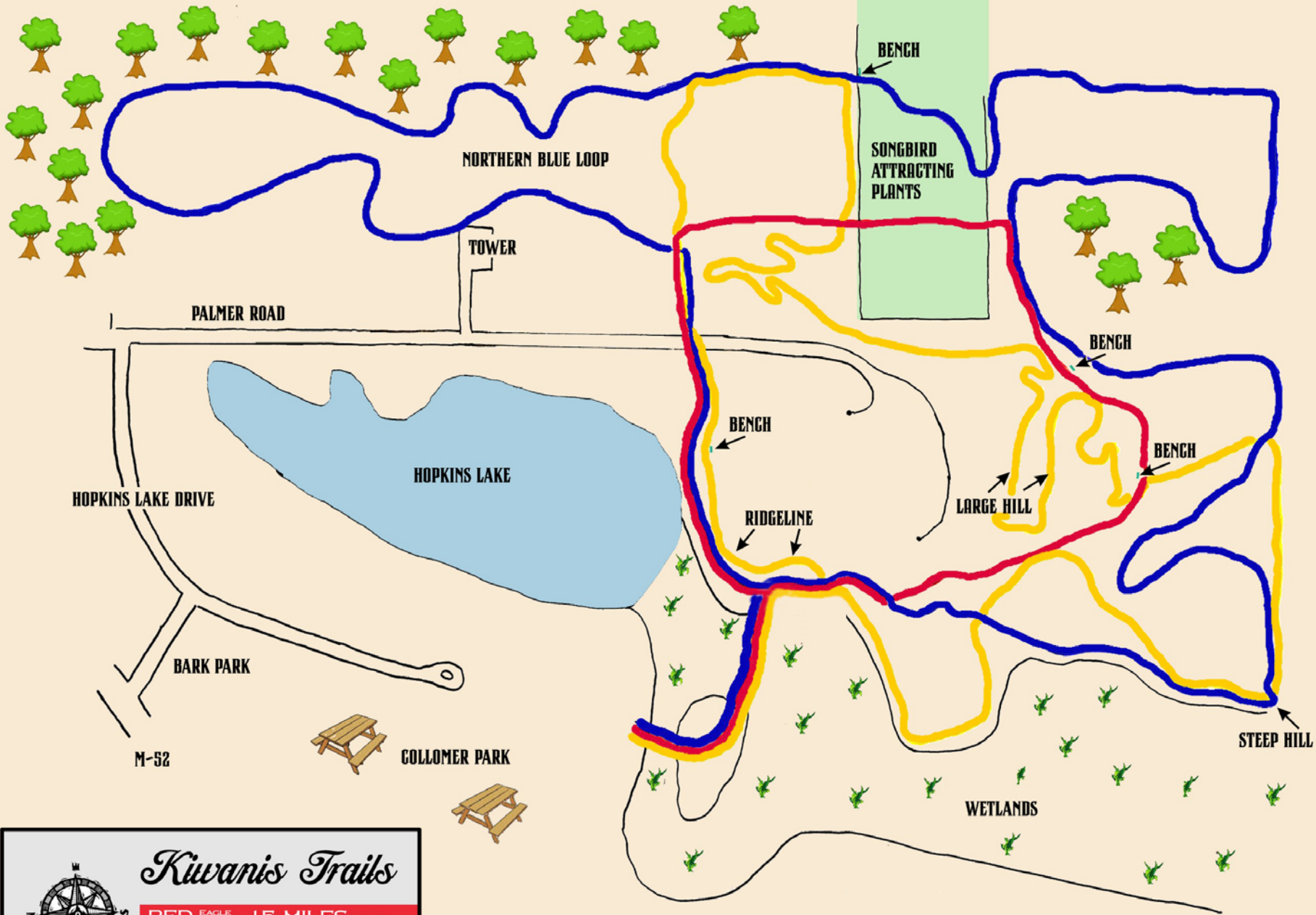
INJURY TO PARK PROPERTY. No person shall injure, mar or damage in any manner, any monument, ornament, fence, bridge, seat, tree, fountain, shrub, flower, playground equipment, fireplaces, or other public property within or pertaining to the public parks or playgrounds. Any person convicted of damage or injury to public property shall reimburse the city for up to three (3) times the amount of the damage as determined by the court.

VENDING. Vending is permitted on a limited basis after application to the city manager and under the administrative rules set by the city. Applications are available at city hall.

PUBLIC NOTICE. The public shall be deemed to have been properly notified of the provisions of these rules and regulations upon their publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the city at least annually before April 1. Signs may be posted to insure substantial compliance with the provisions of these rules and regulations.

I hereby certify that the foregoing document is a true and complete copy of action taken by the Owosso City Council at the regular meeting of December 16, 2013.

Amy K. Kirkland, City Clerk



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Vandalism: Preventing the Writing on the Wall

L. Shroades - October 2006 - Maintenance & Operations

Whether the facilities they oversee are in large cities or small towns, maintenance managers with most organizations must deal with vandalism. Facilities open to the public, such as schools and municipal buildings, are among the most common targets. Keeping one step ahead of vandals often becomes a daily challenge.

"Whenever vandals figure out a way to beat our system, our staff sits down and tries to figure out a way to change it," says Stanley LaFave, facility maintenance supervisor for the City of Sioux City, Iowa. In most cases, success in this cat-and-mouse game involves combination of persistence and common sense.

Restrooms as Targets

While vandalism can occur nearly anywhere in a facility, restrooms in particular provide an array of opportunities to cause destruction. They feature doors to kick, partitions and fixtures to hang from, walls to cover with graffiti, drains to clog, and soap and paper dispensers to knock off walls. The challenge for managers then becomes specifying restroom equipment with vandalism prevention in mind.

LaFave says his organization has taken several steps to prevent vandalism in restrooms, including replacing ceramic sinks and toilets with stainless-steel units in areas where broken fixtures are an ongoing problem.

"Stainless-steel fixtures are a costly investment up front, but they pay for themselves in the long run," he says. Managers should track how often their workers replace existing fixtures. Then they can compare the labor and equipment costs associated with repairs with the cost of installing stainless-steel fixtures.

Touch-free fixtures also can help reduce vandalism. They use fewer moving parts for users to break. And because the fixtures provide water only when in use, they can deter vandals trying to plug sinks. Besides increasing water waste, overflowing sinks can damage floors, especially if a restroom is located on a building's upper floors.

"We use a lot of hands-off fixtures in restrooms now for a couple reasons, including vandalism," says Bob Casagrande, director of plant operations and facility maintenance at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, adding that the fixtures also improve hygiene sanitation. Vandalism considerations also are playing a larger role in the specification of soap and paper dispensers.

"We have a variety of soap-dispensing units," says Dawn Miller, plant operations manager with Minneapolis Public Schools. While disposable soap dispensers might be a better investment for facilities with more vandalism, foam dispensers have worked in some of the district's schools.

"They're economical, they work well, and we haven't had much trouble with them," she says. Managers also can choose from a wide variety of paper dispensers.

"In the last few weeks, I've seen four different styles of paper-towel dispensers," Miller says. "Some of the new, heavier plastic ones work okay, but they're not meant to last a lifetime." Most dispensers, whatever their type, break down from use or vandalism within two years of installation, she says, so she looks for options that would be the most cost-effective with a two-year life cycle.

Flush-mounted paper-towel units also offer vandalism benefits. SMU has installed these types of units at his campus, and Casagrande says vandals haven't been able to as easily damage such units.

Eyes on the Problem

Since Minneapolis Public Schools installed security cameras, the maintenance staff has had to replace fewer restroom fixtures, Miller says.

The reduction “has a lot to do with the cameras in the hallways,” she says. The cameras are positioned so security personnel can watch individuals enter and exit restrooms. The mere presence of cameras can minimize acts of destruction.

“Students know they are on camera, and they know they are being watched at all times,” Miller says.

Adds LaFave, “It seems that once people notice that they are being watched, it deters the acts of vandalism.” His organization also has installed cameras in high-vandalism areas.

Miller says the school district is installing web-based cameras on the interior and exterior of several of its buildings.

“We started using cameras on a minimal basis, and it seemed to help,” she says. “Now, we’re finding that it is really a good tool to use to help lessen occurrences of vandalism. It has been one of our most successful measures.

The process for installing the cameras is slow and expensive, but many managers say they can be worth the costs and effort if organizations choose to place them in areas where people can see the cameras and the cameras can see them.

“I think the cameras have been heaven sent,” she says. “It has really cut back our maintenance on vandalism-related jobs.” In other cases, however, installing and implementing a camera security system is cost prohibitive.

“It seems now that the vandalism has shifted from where the cameras can see to where we don’t have coverage,” LaFave says. “It is just too costly to monitor everything.”

Adds Miller, “The cameras are a major investment, but (the investment) doesn’t just address a vandalism issue, it addresses an overall safety issue, and it has helped students and staff feel safer.”

Personal safety, not vandalism, prompted SMU to install cameras around its campus, but the cameras also have been useful during cases of vandalism and theft.

“Most of the cameras are not directly monitored, but if we have a car broken into we can go back and look at the video,” Casagrande says. “That has been very helpful.” He doesn’t recommend that managers install fake camera systems to deter vandalism.

Managers at SMU “talked about putting in fake cameras, but they give people a false sense of security because the people think that someone is actually watching them,” he says. “Individuals might feel more secure, but if a crime happened, there would be no tape.”

Early Intervention

Repairing areas damaged by vandals as quickly as possible helps to prevent future destruction.

“The best advice is when you see vandalism or graffiti you need to address it immediately,” LaFave says. “It deters others from participating in such acts.”

Adds Miller, “We consider vandalism as an urgent emergency.” His staff repairs all vandalism within 48 hours.

"Within one business day, we remove all graffiti," she says. "And if a window is broken, our glazers are on weekend response to fix it instead of putting a big board on it."

Monitoring patterns of vandalism also can help managers anticipate future events.

For example, "The last week of school is usually a big week for vandalism," Miller says. Increasing public visibility at facility sites is another step managers can take.

"We added lighting and trimmed the trees and shrubbery in the areas commonly tagged by vandals, so people driving by could see the area better," Miller says. "We also recently have been able to remove some portable classrooms, which lessens hiding spaces for such activities."

Managers should check their exterior lighting fixtures to make sure the bulbs and timers are working properly, she says.

Barriers, such as post-and-chain fences and parking-lot gate arms, also can be useful to discourage or restrict access to areas.

"About 60-70 percent of our parking lots now have gate arms because we found that they help to mitigate theft and vandalism," Casagrande says. "Folks are more likely to go onto a lot that is not gated to break into cars."

Plants that feature thorns also can discourage individuals from getting too close to buildings.

"We use non-intrusive plants, like hollies and roses, that poke you if you get too close to them," Casagrande says.

Vandalism is a never-ending battle, but a sound strategy can help managers minimize the destruction and costs.

Says Miller, "I think being proactive, walking around your site, trying to determine what your vandalism areas are and continually assessing your strategy can help reduce your vandalism costs."

Solution Strategies

Once managers have identified areas in their facilities that are likely targets for vandals, the next step is finding solutions to prevent and minimize damage. Here are products managers have found successful in preventing vandalism:

Thermostat sensor plates. Many organizations have a problem with vandals breaking thermostats off the walls. As a solution, Stanley LaFave, facility maintenance supervisor with the City of Sioux City, Iowa, says his department has installed sensor plates.

"With the sensor plates, there is nothing to destroy," LaFave says. The sensors are computer-programmed, and LaFave can control them from his office. The sensor plates have been more successful in stopping vandalism occurrences than thermostat guards.

"The guards for the thermostats really don't help or assist because vandals will just beat them off the wall," LaFave says. Also, guards don't really prevent people from changing the thermostat's set temperature. "They'll use paper clips or letter openers to turn the thermostats up or down," he says.

Graffiti-removal products. Managers can choose from a variety of products designed to minimize graffiti

damage. Bob Casagrande, director of plant operations and facility maintenance at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, says his organization paints a clear, peel-off coating on the exterior of some of its buildings.

"So if they're painting graffiti, they're actually painting on the coating that you can peel off," he says.

Elevator fixtures. Because vandalism often occurs in areas that offer privacy, many organizations find damage in their facility's elevators.

"In addition to vandal-resistant controls, we put surfaces in elevators that are difficult to scratch, such as stainless-steel panels," Casagrande says. Managers also might have a problem with individuals stealing light bulbs from elevators. LaFave says he is looking for a light-bulb guard for his facility's elevators.

"I'm trying to find something that is pleasing to the eye," he says, adding that finding products that preserve a facility's inviting, comfortable atmosphere while still protecting assets is an ongoing balancing act that requires persistence and patience.

— *Renee L. Shroades*