

Park Board Meeting Minutes October 21, 2025

Park Board Members Present: Frank Sweeney, Thomas Shea, Jim DeHerrera, Emily Butler, Melissa Hartman, Bruce Aronson.

Park Board Members Absent: Terri Dunn.

City Staff: Maria Butts, Jennie Bradford.

Guests: Tim Hinderman, Whitefish Ski Heritage Museum

- A. Call to Order at 6:02 p.m.
- B. Changes to the October 21, 2025, Agenda. None.
- C. Approval of September 9, 2025, Minutes. Motion to approve made by Vice Chair DeHerrera and seconded by Member Sweeney. All ayes.
- D. Public Comments: Rachel Schmidt of 675 Woodside Lane with Safe Trails Whitefish is working on creating and completing a network of trails in our community. Their current focus is on the southern terminus of the River Trail. They would like to create a concept design plan to use in the River Lakes Master design plan. Safe Trails Whitefish will be announcing a community stakeholder meeting to develop this plan, which will then be presented to the Parks Board to hopefully enter into a formal public process and eventual adoption of a master plan. Safe Trails will keep everyone informed of these meeting details and projects as they progress and work commences.
Jennifer Saucier of 4018 Whitefish Stage, Kalispell, also with Safe Trails Whitefish, wanted to piggyback on what Rachel said and asked that the board prioritize some of the projects they will be working on, one being the River Lakes Park plan. In speaking with staff, Safe Trails will detail where the Parks Board will be involved and will note those projects that will need to be considered under Capital Improvement plan over the next few years. Jennifer also asked that the City be a stakeholder in the process as there is city property in the River Lakes area and with developing how all the trails come together. The board was provided with a map that outlines some of the areas left to complete. On another note, Jennifer wanted to clarify agenda item H. a.) pertained to multi day weekend events and there was not language being developed to exclude multi week events such as the Farmer's Market. Jennifer commented on agenda item I. a.) and hopes we can find a way to fix what is currently there and keep the sign attached and expressed concerns that the proposed monument sign was grossly large and blocked the view of the Depot. If the sign was changed, she hoped it would be smaller. Vice Chair DeHerrera sought confirmation from Director Butts that the River Lakes Parkway trail was part of the Connect Whitefish Plan. Jennifer shared at this point they are wanting to make sure it makes sense to connect the other trails and have connections in the that area, as there are

contours along the river that would potentially make it difficult to build a trail. Safe Trails is going to be raising money to do the engineering work to see if it is viable. Rhonda Fitzgerald of Lupfer Ave. shared she was in attendance for agenda item H. a.) as when discussion of Depot Park comes up the Farmer's Market is always brought into the conversation. On subject of the Depot Park sign, Rhonda shared Bruce Boody designed the Depot Park Master Plan for which she was on the committee and it was intentional to keep sign low to showcase the view of the Depot.

E. Committee Reports

- a. Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee – Vice Chair DeHerrera was not at the last meeting. Director Butts attended and shared a lot of the conversation surrounding Safe Trails Whitefish and the River Trail, prioritizing and trying to identify what that would look like moving forward. Mayor Muhlfeld is still trying to connect with Amber of FWP. Staff are still working with Kenny to move the Riverbend discussion forward.
- b. Tree Advisory Committee – Member Dunn was not in attendance, so Director Butts shared the approved minutes from the June meeting were provided to the board.
- c. WSFF Board – Member Shea shared he was not at the last meeting. He expressed trouble attending the meetings lately which occur midday. He shared that things are going well according to their report. They are slowly making progress with the new facility and working with the City of Kalispell. They are working on getting bids for the roof leaks. He also shared this is the busiest public skating schedule Greg Harms can remember. Member Sweeney shared he will be Member Shea's back-up if he cannot attend the meetings.
- d. WAG Board – Member Aronson shared the new well is connected and the irrigation system is ready to go next season. The pond is draining in anticipation of reducing the turbidity. The dog park webcam is available on their website.

F. Presentations

- a. Ski Museum Walkway – Tim Hinderman shared the history of the ski museum facility and the recent installation of a 1968 bullwheel from WMR. Member Sweeney motioned to continue to work with staff and move forward with this project. Seconded by Member Shea. All ayes. Tim also spoke to the limited ADA parking (1 space). Director Butts shared as Public Works does the striping she can connect him with them. Director Butts reminded Tim to consult with the Planning Department regarding signage.

G. Public Hearings: NA

H. Old Business:

- a. Reconsideration of Park Board decision to not permit multi-weekend events in Depot Park and review of Oktoberfest 2025 turf impacts. Vice Chair DeHerrera suggested revising the Depot Park Policy to identify Oktoberfest as the only permitted multi-weekend event and for all other aspects of the policy to apply year-round, not Memorial to Labor Day.

Member Sweeney moved to revise policy to allow Oktoberfest to proceed as a multi-weekend event on the condition they increase protective measures that worked well this year and work with the Parks Department and financially support the resodding and possibly mounding or redirecting soil particularly in the NE corner where they have concerns. Seconded by Vice Chair DeHerrera. All ayes. Rhonda Fitzgerald sought clarification that Oktoberfest cannot set up or occur until after the last Farmer's Market of the season, the last Tuesday of September. Director Butts confirmed that it is accurate.

I. New Business:

- a. Consideration to change Depot Park monument sign to match other park signs or to have existing monument sign replaced with more durable design. Member Sweeney asked Director Butts for the best option. Director Butts said if they want to keep the same lettering, then she recommends having the sign made as 2 words. Rhonda Fitzgerald shared Heart of Whitefish could help to fund the cost. Vice Chair DeHerrera gave Director Butts direction to have Acutech create whole words ("Depot" and "Park"). Member Sweeney agreed and said find out what it will cost and then if Heart of Whitefish can contribute that would be great.
- b. Consideration to continue with combined food concession and nonmotorized watercraft rental contract. The board unanimously agreed to direct staff to continue with the model used this past summer and renew the lease (5 years) that once finalized the board can review. In relation to increasing the rent, Member Sweeney requested staff consider the concessions revenue is up 10%.

J. Other Items:

- a. Discussion about potential cancellations of November and December meetings. Motion to approve cancelling both meetings made by Member Sweeney. Seconded by Member Shea. All ayes.

K. Items from Parks and Recreation Department

- a. Administrative Report: Director Butts shared a resident's request to add more lighting to Riverside Park. The board agreed to add this to the Project List. Member Butler suggested low profile lighting like that on Texas Ave. The Glacier Twins sought approval from Director Butts to submit their annual report for the January Park Board meeting.
- b. Recreation Coordinator Report: NA
- c. Maintenance Report: NA
- d. Community Services Coordinator Report: NA

L. Correspondence: NA

M. Items from the Park Board: NA

N. Adjourned at 8:07 p.m.