

## Park and Recreation Minutes

October 23, 2023

The joint meeting was called to order by Chair Mike Carey. Present were Mike Carey, Kacie Fahey, Tanya Borchardt, Mark Page, Nicole Bower and Dawn McCracken.

Empire Park Improvements included the finalization of requirements for the DNR Grant. This grant covered a new playground at Town Hall Park, new native flower gardens and signs. There was also trail work done to repair roots breaking through the pavement. New trees were also purchased through Dakota County and planted around the disc golf course.

Farmington installed a new park and playground near the High School which includes a trail from the park to the school. The pavement impact rating survey was completed and will be used in future years to determine which trails will be updated and when. A new 3-phase plan for improvements to Rambling River Park has been made. This will include the addition of a skate park. Farmington will be applying for a State grant and County Park assistance program to help cover these cost.

In the future, there will be a park added to Vermillion Commons in Farmington as part of the development and they're looking at fresh ideas for the art park once the new apartment complex is completed. They are also exploring ways to highlight fishing in the Vermillion River to encourage more activity.

Friends and Fun time didn't have enough participants register in Empire or Farmington so it was cancelled for the summer and may not be offered next year. However, the Puppet Wagon continues to be a success and will continue to be offered. Pickleball lessons were offered by Farmington and they were well attended. All games were held at the Empire pickleball/tennis courts at Town Hall Park. These lessons will most likely be offered again next year and held at the Empire Courts again if available.

Empire hosts Summer Entertainment in the park 2x monthly in the summer with a average of 80-100 attendees per event. However, the FHS band event drew in nearly 500+ attendees for the event. The petting zoo is historically the second best attended event.

There were 2 joint Food Truck Nights in 2023. Spring seems to be better attended with people ready to get out of the house and enjoy treat they haven't had in the winter. This Fall event saw a lower attendance as it coincided with a home football game that had food trucks as well. Despite the lower attendance, the vendors in Fall reported positive results and are interested in returning. The two Committees will continue to workshop ideas to draw a larger Fall crowd in 2024. The Spring Food Truck will be Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 from 5-8pm.

Farmington hosts a Music in the Park series the last Wednesday of the month during the summer with an average of 600+ attendees per event. They also showed two movies in the park with 500+ attendees per event. One movie was held on a Friday night and the other on a Saturday night.

Empire is working with Deer Creek, a potential developer. These properties would potentially begin development in Spring of 24 if all items are agreed upon and approved. Kwik Trip owns the land next to Stelzel Fields and is expected to begin development in 2024. It continues to work with Empire to address

resident concerns. Nitti Sanitation opened their new location a 16555 Clayton Avenue for their trash transfer station.

Farmington is working on a 74-unit apartment complex going into the downtown area. There is also a townhome development and 3 single family home developments in process. There aren't currently any commercial development projects in the works although Square Cut Pizza recently opened. A few existing commercial buildings have been purchased though no plans are in motion for a new business. HBC will be opening a storefront in the old Zen Nails space as the project develops and service to the area is connected.

The city of Empire is running similar to Empire Township. The biggest change was going from a 3-person Town Board to a 5-person Mayor/City Council. A Committee member has been added to both the Park and Recreation Commission and the Planning Commission. Most Ordinances and Zoning regulations have remained the same.

The Empire Celebration was successful with 615 attendees. Residents had a lot of fun with the DJ, sheriff's department, petting zoo, a mobile library, face painting, balloon artist, dinner, ice cream and more!

Dew Days was a successful event for Farmington and saw a great turnout over the weekend. The addition of inflatables for kids/teens was well received. Despite the rain, attendee were ready for fun and didn't let it slow the event down.

Empire will be hosting an Intro to Budgeting course on November 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Public Works building. This will be open to anyone, however, interested participants are required to register by emailing Dawn at [clerk@ci.empire.mn.us](mailto:clerk@ci.empire.mn.us) or by calling City Hall at 651-463-4494.

Empire and Farmington will each put an agenda item for their first meeting in November to create a sub-committee to discuss the future Fall Food Truck night.

The meeting was adjourned.