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TO: Goodhue County Parks, Trails, and Recreation Advisory Board

FROM: Jess Greenwood, Public Works Director

RE: 16 Jun 26 Park Board Meeting
Byllesby Park Playground Replacement

Date: 08 Jun 26

Summary

It is requested that the Park Board evaluate options for replacing the Byllesby Park playground.

Background

The current playground at Byllesby Park is starting to show its age and is not ADA compliant. The Park Board discussed its replacement at their 15 Aug 25 meeting, with a new hard structure playground and accessible poured in place rubber footing as the preferred option.

Playground replacement has been cut from the 2027 Goodhue County Capital Improvement Plan and postponed indefinitely.

The Greater MN Regional Parks & Trails Commission (GMRPTC) is now allowing regional parks to apply for grant funding to replace hard structure playgrounds. There are a few motivators driving this change in grant opportunities:

- Striving to include more accessible and inclusive opportunities in the regional park system in greater MN
- Understanding that accessible and inclusive playgrounds are more expensive
- In order to be eligible for local park grants through the DNR, the DNR now requires all parts of the local park to be ADA compliant or to have an ADA transition plan and projects budgeted for in the next 1-2 years that will bring the entire park into compliance
- We are assuming that GMRPTC will follow suit with the DNR and have this same requirement within the next few years

GMRPTC/Legacy grants recommend a 25% local match. One scenario would be to organize a public fundraising campaign for that 25% match and pursue a GMRPTC grant for part of the playground replacement. These grants have a cap of \$100,000 and the Commission normally funds \$100,000 - \$250,000 per year for this project category. Quotes for our

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playground replacement in 2025 were \$230,000-\$250,000 with full poured in place rubber surfacing, and prices typically increase about 5% per year. This grant does come with the requirement that the playground is maintained into perpetuity. The GMRPTC grant cycle is as follows:

- Grant applications are due towards the end of July each year
- Applicants are notified in November or December if their project is being recommended for funding
- Recommended projects go to the Minnesota Legislature for approval in the spring of the following year
- Once approved, the applicant must enter into a contract with the MN DNR
- Funds are available on July 1st or once the contract is in place, and are good for a three-year period. For example, a grant application in July of 2027 that is selected for funding would have a funding period of 01 Jul 2028 – 31 May 2031.

Some vendors, such as Landscape Structures, have grant resource pages where organizations can apply for different grants for playground replacement. Other vendors offer grants (which can be more like discounts) if you commit to purchasing their equipment.

If the Park Board would like to pursue playground replacement and wishes to recommend replacement to the County Board of Commissioners, staff would present these options to the County Board to determine if they are agreeable to one, or a combination, of these options.

If so, staff would work with vendors on design and quotes for playground replacement. After a vendor is chosen and a target installation date and budget amount are determined, staff would begin fundraising for match funds and applying for grants.

Alternatives

- Recommend one of the above funding options to the County Board of Commissioners for playground replacement
- Do not recommend a funding alternative and do not pursue playground replacement at this time

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of staff that the Park Board discuss the above opportunities and recommend a playground replacement alternative funding option to the County Board of Commissioners.

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