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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
Community Engagement

Date: 08 Jun 26

Summary

It is requested that the Park Board evaluate potential community engagement at Byllesby Park and/or Nielsen Memorial Preserve.

Background

With limited park staff and financial resources, neither Byllesby Park nor Nielsen Memorial Preserve currently offer any interpretive programs, formal volunteer opportunities, or fundraising programs.

A few of the Byllesby Park neighbors are currently volunteering at the park in an informal capacity by picking up litter, removing invasive species, etc. Both the Cannon Falls and Kenyon areas have residents that are passionate about outdoor recreation, environmental education, and stewardship of our natural resources.

The Park Board reviewed several models for community engagement at their 25 Mar 26 meeting. It was determined to begin the process with a formalized volunteer program and partnering with existing community organizations, such as Cannon Falls Community Education & Recreation, to deliver programming at Byllesby Park. This would allow interested volunteers and leaders to emerge and be evaluated; and provide the opportunity for a park Friends Group to develop organically. Staff has identified the following ideas for volunteer and programming opportunities:

Volunteer Opportunities

- Build, install, and maintain bird and/or owl houses
- Earth Day park clean-up
- Tree planting
- Water and weed new and existing plants
- Develop signage for native plants around the pavilion
- Prairie maintenance
- Mural development and painting

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Passive Programming (in coordination with Dakota County)

- Scavenger hunt with Dakota County – could collect a sticker or small item at Dakota County Park office
- Junior Ranger/Park Explorer activity and patch or sticker
- Natural resources trivia or murder mystery geocache

Active Programming

Goodhue County could partner with organizations such as Community Education & Recreation and Master Naturalists to bring active interpretive programming to the parks:

- Seasonal plant walks
- Watershed education
- Entomology - bug collecting, examination, and identification
- Animals – what lives in and around the lake and Cannon River
- Nature art (leaf prints, suncatcher, bird feeder, etc.)
- Beginner paddle from Western Boat Launch
- Sunrise yoga in the park
- Winter Solstice luminary or labyrinth walk
- Talks about the dam, fur trade, and/or milling with Dakota County staff and the Cannon Falls History Center
- Approach Prairie Island to see if there may be mutual interest in any topics, displays, etc.

Alternatives

- Provide feedback to staff regarding goals for community engagement at Byllesby Park
- Do not develop further community engagement at this time

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of staff that the Park Board discuss the above opportunities and provide feedback on community engagement goals.

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