

**Town of Munster**  
**Department of Parks and Recreation**  
**Board Report July 20, 2021**

**DIRECTOR/ADMINISTRATION**

2021 Bond Issue: The Town is planning on doing one general obligation bond again in 2021 which would include park projects that we submit. This was done in 2020 to save on the bond issuance costs and seemed to work well. Some of the items we'll be including as needed capital improvements are: hard court repair/replacement at Cobblestones Park, replacement utility vehicle for Community Park; system wide landscaping improvements; pool heater replacement; Five-year parks master plan consultant; continued equipment replacement; asphalt paving replacement; and other capital improvements.

2022 Budget: The budget worksheet was received from the Clerk-Treasurer's office for 2022 last week and needs to be submitted by July 28<sup>th</sup>. Part time wage ranges will need to be increased to be more competitive with other part time employment opportunities in our area. It was difficult to find part timers for park maintenance this year and never really did have a full load of staff as desired. We were fortunate on the recreation side of things but it is something we need to increase to be more competitive in the years to come as more businesses raise their minimum wage. I'd also like to increase our other contractual services to help free up park maintenance staff to do the odd things that always seem to pop up that require special attention.

2021 Budget: The Town is still awaiting receipt of the America Recovery Plan funds to replenish the parks budget cuts made earlier this year as the ripple effect from the pandemic. Once received the Town Council will have to make additional appropriations to increase our department budgeted line items, assuming they plan on doing so. The hope was at least half those funds would have been received already this year. We're getting kind of nervous since we're more than halfway through the year and only have one more planned season to make cuts to if necessary.

Centennial Park use: I've been receiving calls and emails from people wanting the Town to charge non-Munster cars to use the park. The general thought is that it's unfair for Munster residents to be the only ones paying for maintenance of the park (via taxes) when so many non-residents are receiving the benefit of using the park on a day-to-day basis at no cost. While this has previously been discussed, I wanted to make you aware these comments were being made to us. I remember one of the comments made from the Board was to let's see how things go this summer before we make any rash decisions. At this point in the summer, I would say that grilling in the park is not as bad as last summer (keep in mind the park was open until 11pm most of last summer). Police calls to the park are down by 16% compared to last summer. Staff reports the park is still as busy as last summer. If the pay-to-park idea is something that might be desired in the future, I could invite the parking company to come and give a presentation on how that equipment works at a future Park Board meeting. This is something that I think we should begin

to investigate further to help make up for other areas of our department that have had to absorb substantial budget cuts.

Basketball hoops: We have a basketball court at Beech Park as well as at Briar Creek Park that both have one hoop up. There are poles for two hoops in a full-court layout but there is only one there. From my understanding, the second hoop was taken down years ago in response to complaints about loud music, foul language, cars parked up by the courts, litter, and users intimidating the tennis court users which are right next to the court at Beech. Just looking for your direction on if you want us to permanently remove the second pole, put a second hoop back up, leave the site as is or consider making two half courts a permanent solution by putting the hoops in the middle of the court facing away from each other. We have an example of that type of layout at Twin Creeks Park.

Pool: Generally speaking, this has been a challenging pool season. Our facility has become a regional destination due to a lack of other available pools even though that was probably not the intent when the facility was constructed. Hot days (85 degrees plus), are consistently the most challenging days due to higher attendance and shorter temperament from patrons. We've implemented some changes as previously suggested with some success. The police department has tried to be at the pool more often and not only when they're called which is also helpful. The biggest struggle is still trying to get people to wear proper swim attire which is the biggest disagreement with users and staff. The pool is absorbing time from many staff in the department to deal with issues and taking us away from other things that need attention.

Pool saves: The amount of pool saves being made this year is also unprecedented. The weekend of July 2-5 we had as many saves that we had all last year. It is mainly noted that we're saving a lot of kids going down the blue slide and some multiple times in the same day. We are considering increasing the height requirement to use the slide or mandating that a child can swim or tread water to go down the slide. Response from parents on site is generally given as that's why lifeguards are there.

Pool heater: The pool heater was recently repaired after failing. We are planning to include a full replacement of this original unit in the 2021 bond issue list of projects.

Pool rules: The rules that the Park Board approved in June helped slightly with private party rentals. We can charge for police security to be at these parties now when the larger crowds necessitate it. I thought not allowing tickets to be sold at the door would eliminate the adult oriented pool parties by promoters, but these rentals are simply selling tickets online in advance using Eventbrite and have not hesitated to pay for the police security costs. We're still having groups renting the facility where they are charging their guests to attend (one mentioned they were even a non-profit). In the pool off-season, staff will prepare some recommendations for your consideration so we can have clearly defined rules and processes for the 2022 pool season to ensure a positive experience for patrons and staff.

The Grape Escape: We had to cancel this event. The response from wineries was underwhelming as most are still reeling from the impact of the pandemic. Most are going through challenges with finances, staff, and even product production with some. We also met with the State of Indiana excise police regarding the event. We are unable to offer the event in the same way it was done in the past. We're going to work with Centennial Park golf as the liquor license holder, server, and seller to see if we can feasibly offer a similar event in the future. However, the costs will likely have to substantially change from the \$7 admission and free unlimited wine samples.

SSCVA Jumpstart Grant: We submitted for a Jumpstart grant for \$20,000 from the South Shore Convention and Visitor's Authority. These funds, if received, will help finance several fall events due to budget cuts we made earlier this year.

Independence Day events: A lot of staff time was given to plan for the events on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Coordination of staging the parade lineup at the pool parking lot, while keeping the pool open was completed. We also coordinated the fireworks display, food vendors, portapotties, band, advertising, event setup and cleanup at Centennial Park on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Town of Munster radio show: Mark Heintz and Jill Higgins participated in the Town of Munster radio show on WJOB on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

Dog Park connectivity: We are working with Impact and Midwestern Electric to get a more consistent network connection to the dog park. The wireless connection has been very sporadic lately and we need better reliability from the connection. We are going to look at moving the antenna at each entrance to the dog park to get better 'line of sight' connection from the antenna at each gate entrance to the antenna on the Centennial Park clubhouse. This direct line is being compromised as trees continue to grow and block the 'line of sight' between the antennae.

Frank H. Hammond Park accessibility improvements: On July 9th, Thornton Blacktop completed the asphalt ADA accessibility improvements to make the connections at Frank H. Hammond Park from the north parking lot to the track, hard court area and shelter area. Park maintenance staff will complete restoration work and remove excess dirt from the completed work. We still plan on updating the tennis court gate to an accessible width.

## **RECREATION**

Summer Intern, Mara has been a great addition to our team this summer. Tasks have been taken on wholeheartedly with a smile. We are thankful for her help and wish her the best at Valparaiso University this upcoming school year.

Superintendent spoke on WJOB promoting Parks and Recreation month.

Brainstorming and planning has begun for the Fall Recreation Guide.

Summer Camp is running well. Two more counselors were hired to help with numbers. McDonald's and Supercuts have continued their sponsorship. The campers enjoy the ice cream trucks on Mondays.

Community Market has been decent. Father's Day was rough with attendance and July 11 was cut short due to weather, but overall vendors have been satisfied. We have 4 markets left.

Recreation Staff met with Excise Police representative regarding rules for Grape Escape. Grape Escape was cancelled for 2021 and we will look to revise it somehow for 2022.

Chicago Crime Tour was very well received by the trip goers! With a van of 9 enrolled, they embarked on a adventure downtown. Due to the high request of this trip, we will be offering another one in the fall.

Programs/events to run this month: Swim Lessons, Babysitting Lessons and Safety Training, Craft in a Box, Koolaid and Kanvas, Pint Size Camps, Summer Camp, Biddy Baskets, Chicago White Sox Training Camp, Hit Run and Score, Intro to Skateboarding, Lil' Mustang Kickers, Wado-Ki Karate, Tennis programs, Pickleball Singles Flex League, Sunday Concert Series (7/11, 7/25), Community Market, Movie in the Park, Ladies Empowerment Walk, Native Plants 101, Safety BINGO, Summer in Michigan Wine Tasting Tour

Pint Size Camps are running well with 118 enrolled. Nine of the 10 schedule camps are active.

Session #1 completed of youth and adult tennis. Classes ran well with most at capacity.

Ice Cream BINGO was well-attended with 32 Keen-Agers.

Intro to Skateboarding began with 29 participants. Taught by Driftwood Collective, instructors are allowing kids to try professional skateboards, teaching safety basics and techniques.

Biddy Baskets, Lil' Mustang Kickers and Hit Run and Score are the Afternoon Sports Camps. With a total of 58 enrolled, classes ran smoothly with the exception of many rain cancellations/makeups.

Currently 170 Keen-agers are new or have renewed their membership for 2021.

Sixteen June rentals have been scheduled for the Community Park Social Center and 12 shelter rentals. At Munster Pool, 2 birthday parties, 7 private parties and 5 group rentals are reserved. At this time, 14 rentals are scheduled for August with 6 Heritage Park weddings.

Munster Community Pool: During the month of July, we have had 33 Rescue Reports filled out, the Police have been called 3 times, and the average attendance for this month is 732 people. We have given plenty of rain passes to people that have continued to wear clothes into the water.

## **FINANCIAL SUMMARY OF COMPLETED PROGRAMS**

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>NR</b>	<b>REVENUE</b>	<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>VARIANCE</b>
Biddy Baskets	17	7	\$ 1,150.00	\$ 155.00	\$ 995.00
Chicago Crime Tour	3	6	\$ 660.00	\$ 374.19	\$ 285.81
Chicago White Sox Camp	43		\$ 1,075.00	\$ 15.00	\$ 1,060.00
Craft in a Box	2	0	\$ 40.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 30.00
Hit Run & Score	17	1	\$ 810.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 660.00
Home Alone	3	3	\$ 225.00	\$ 60.00	\$ 165.00
Ice Cream Bingo	32		\$ 160.00	\$ 25.78	\$ 134.22
Intro to Skateboarding	18	11	\$ 435.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 425.00
Ladies Empowerment Walk	2	15	\$ 204.00	\$ 128.40	\$ 75.60
Lil' Kickers Soccer	14	2	\$ 740.00	\$ 155.00	\$ 585.00
Wado Ki/ Little Dragons	23	4	\$ 454.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 444.00
Youth & Adult Tennis Lessons	110	27	\$ 9,728.00	\$ 2,415.42	\$ 7,312.58
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>\$15,681.00</b>	<b>\$3,508.79</b>	<b>\$ 12,172.21</b>

### **PARK/CENTENNIAL MAINTENANCE**

#### **Park Maintenance**

In addition to daily trash and litter pick up, bathroom cleaning, Social Center set up, daily pool maintenance, gas plant monitoring/maintenance and leachate pump operation/recording, the following tasks were completed;

About twenty dead trees were removed from various parks and the holes were filled and seeded.

About half of the old barrel trash cans at the Fisher St garage were cut up and disposed of.

Weeds were sprayed in all playgrounds.

Bush trimming continues.

Forever Green sprayed the second application of lawn weed control at all large parks with athletic fields.

The drinking fountains on the Community Park press boxes were turned on. We are working on getting the rest turned on.

Soccer goals were moved back in place at White Oak Park.

Circuit boards and valve kits were installed on the pool showers, all showers are now working.

The pool lift pump which pumps out ground water and rainwater from the deck failed, flooding the pump house, and had to be replaced on a Saturday morning.

Pool chemicals for the remainder of the season, chlorine, shock and acid, was delivered to the pump house.

Banners for the fireworks show were grommeted.

We are in the process of getting quotes for replacement windows at the pool concession stand and admissions building.

Piled up 24 loads of playground mulch at the Fisher St yard as they were delivered over two days, Superior Groundcover will start blowing it into all playgrounds on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Centennial Maintenance**

Staff worked with Midwestern Electric tracking down a short in the bollard light around the stage.

Trimmed low hanging branches in the beer garden area.

Moved picnic tables throughout the north end of the park.

Working with Rask Fire Safety and AT&T to get the fire alarm repaired, waiting for AT&T to come out.

Installed three memorial plaques and dropped three memorial bricks off at the engraver and installed them.

Releveled about 15 other bricks the were heaved.

Sprayed for mosquitos throughout the park and golf course.

Pumped the water from the well head near #9 green.

Cut down a dead tree in the dog park.

Set up and tear down for the July 3<sup>rd</sup> fireworks show.

Bush hogged the top of the landfill hill.

Repaired an irrigation leak.

Painted the door on the golf shanty.

### **CENTENNIAL PARK**

Centennial Park is trending well above expectations year-to-date. Gross income is 22% above expectations, expenses are 2% below expectations, and net income is 84% ahead of budgeted expectations.

The success of the facility is tied to continued strong demand on the golf side of operations, the elimination of restrictions on banquet activities that has allowed food and beverage operations to flourish.

The July 3 celebration was successful, with Centennial Park staff maintaining a wedding at the clubhouse, operating the beer garden, and providing transportation to and from the parking lots for seniors and people with disabilities.

The beer garden was a financial success, generating sales of \$3,415.00.

Centennial Park Synopsis;

	2021	2021 Budgeted Projections	
Gross Income	\$424,983	\$348,040	+22%
Expenses	\$440,576	\$448,903	-2%
Net Income	\$-16,593	\$-100,863	+84%

**Sales/Banquets**

In the last 2 weeks, the sales office had 25 in office appointments/tours; there were 57 new leads.

Bookings include; 3 shelter rentals, 4 meetings, 2 - 2022 weddings, and one repeat golf outing for 2022.

Two events listed above are in the View and patio space.

June F & B revenue to date was \$159,754.

**Course Maintenance**

Tough last half the month of June. 12.65 inches of rain total after a 3-week drought. During the wet period we were able to edge several bunkers that had become overgrown with grass and weeds. During the last part of June, did an extra fungicide application because of the extreme moisture and warm conditions.

New irrigation box was installed on hole #2. It is running perfectly from the computer.

We finally filled out the crew with 2 college students. The will be working till mid-August.

The golf course is looking much better after the rain.