



Red Lodge Parks, Trees and Recreation Board

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2017 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017)

Title 8, Chapter 7 of the Red Lodge City Code defines composition, duties and responsibilities of the Red Lodge Parks, Trees and Recreation Board. This purpose of this code is to establish, improve, care for, regulate and manage a system of public recreation and public trees. The Board Mission is to protect, enhance, and maintain parks, facilities, natural resources, open space, trails, tree and plants by developing and executing the Comprehensive Parks Plan, Trails Plan, Active Transportation Plan and Urban Forest Management Plan. The Board is advisory to the City Council and the Mayor and consists of seven members, six area residents of which up to two may reside outside of the City limits but within five miles of the City limits, and a member of the City Council. Current Board members include:

Dan Seifert, Chairman, term expires December 2017

Kelly Heaton, Vice-Chair, term expires December 2018

Kevin Bonk, Secretary, term expires December 2018

Rue Freeman, term expires December 2018

Theresa Whistler, term expires December 2019

Corey Thompson, City Council Representative, term expires December 2017

Bryan Romeij, term expires December 2019

The Board receives support from members of the City staff designated by the Mayor: James Caniglia, City Planner, and Jim Bushnell, Public Works Director.

Board functions are outlined in:

- Ordinance 918, Composition and Responsibilities of the Red Lodge, Parks, Trees and Regulations Board
- Ordinance 919, Regulations of Trees on City Owned Land and Public Rights-of-Way



Urban Forestry Tree Programs

For a fifth year, trees were planted along City streets in residential areas, under the Urban Forestry **costs-share tree program**. Two additional trees were planted along 11th Street between the curb and sidewalk on the side of Wells Fargo, paid for by an **Arbor Day** grant received from the Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC).



A Tree Inventory for trees within public rights-of-way and in City parks was completed this summer (2017) and an update to the 2009 Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) will be completed before the end of the 2017. The project is financed by a DNRC grant and Park Board funds. The DNRC has helped fund a large portion of our tree related projects over the past five years and they required an inventory to be completed to ensure that their grant money is being used appropriately. The UFMP will analyze which tree species have had the most success in Red Lodge and what issues have negatively impacted our trees. Public outreach will occur in the spring of 2018 which we hope will help residents make better educated decisions on which tree species should be planted in various locations and how to better care for the trees (spoiler alert!: many trees need more water and have been damaged by weed eaters).

As they have for the past several years, former Board member Bob Matter and his wife Liz watered more than 50 trees in the downtown area on a weekly basis during the summer season, providing a total of 144 volunteer hours. Newly planted trees are receiving extra watering. Water gators are placed on the trees during the summer and then removed and stored in the winter. Bob and Liz will not be able to water the trees next year and we will need to find a new way to water the trees. If are interested in volunteering or are able to help in any way, please contact James Caniglia at City Hall.



The City was again certified as a **Tree City USA** for achieving the standards set forth by the National Arbor Day Foundation for activities conducted by the Parks Board. The requirements for maintaining a Tree City USA status requires the City to spend a minimum of \$2 towards tree related projects every year. Red Lodge has been a Tree City USA for over a decade.

A supplemental **Tree City USA Growth Award** was awarded to the City for the third year in a row. Points were earned for an Arbor Day celebration, a tree care workshop, revised tree ordinances, a special tree project for fertilization and volunteer watering, and a dedicated tree maintenance budget.

Over 100 recently planted trees in City street right-of-way were fertilized in the summer of 2015, in June 2016 and in June of 2017 by a local contractor, primarily on the side streets along

Broadway Avenue between 8th Street and 14 Streets and in Coal Miners and Field School Parks. The fertilization included a root injection of special vitamins to promote root growth as well as a foliar fertilizer spray. The fertilization, along with the regular watering, has made a notable difference in the health of the trees. Unfortunately, due to budget reductions, the tree fertilization program is not funded for the fiscal year 2018.

Trees were **trimmed** or removed in Field School Park, Lions Park, Rotary Park, Coal Miners Park, the Dog Park and Finn Park. **Spraying** for pine weevil was done for diseased spruce trees in Lions Park, Field School Park and along Highway 212 near the roundabout.

The Trees Committee is composed of Board members Theresa Whistler and Rue Freeman.

Ongoing Projects & Accomplishments



A demand and engineering analysis is underway to determine how the current Pool could be renovated and will offer alternatives if the current site is deemed to not meet the demands of residents. Alternatives include a rebuilt pool at the current location, a larger pool located at another site and a multi-use recreational center located at different location..

Over 50 people volunteered and participated in our annual **Earth Day** festivities which was bigger and better than ever. 12 high school and nine elementary school students amongst many other volunteers helped with parks cleanup at 14 park locations. A five-yard dumpster donated by Republic Services was filled and six piles of lumber and other trash was collected from the parks. The City Public Works employees collected garbage and limbs that had been gathered by the volunteers. Republic Services gave away trees, local non-profits provided food and drinks at their booths, BRTA gave away three bikes, the Active Transportation Committee showcased their goals and accomplishments and additional environmental related booths for kids provided education and fun while live music was played at Lions Park.

The Parks Board has been working on an update to their Strategic Plan. The Plan is a document that helps prioritize Board needs while focusing on how to help the Board be more efficient.

All City parks were treated for noxious weeds and many trees were pruned for a six-foot clearance or to create clearance for vehicles within the parking lanes of streets.

The Parks Board reviewed and recommended approval of the **Active Transportation Plan** (ATP), which is intended as an update to the Rocky Fork Trails Plan. The Park Board partnered with the ATP Committee to help fund the marking of “bike sharrows” are used as a connector route to connect trails from Coal Miners Park to the Airport Trail at McGillen Avenue. The current route was also chosen to provide a safer route for children along a route that includes Lions Park, the Library, Boys & Girls Club and Mountain View Elementary.



Skate Park underwent some routine maintenance, but it is increasingly difficult to keep some of the ramps as smooth and safe as they need to be. Skate Park is the most regularly and heavily used Red Lodge park. Volunteers have completed most of the maintenance, but more volunteers and/or City-funded work are needed to help keep this much needed and well-used space safe and fun. Please contact James Caniglia at City Hall if you would like to help maintain Skate Park.

The Parks Board agreed to pay for a portion of a new “flowering” statue at **Pride Park**. The statue will be made of steel wire and will have abundant flowers. The Garden Club, who does an amazing job at keeping Pride Park beautiful, proposed the idea to the Parks Board. The statue is expected to be installed in the spring of 2018.

The Parks Board purchased a new basketball backboard and hoop at the basketball court at Lions Park. The backboards are an expensive item and another backboard is in need of replacement. There are currently six hoops at the court and it may appropriate to reduce the number to four.

City Staff and Parks Board members have been working with community members, Montana DEQ, and Montana DNRC to secure a grant that will fund engineering design and cost estimation new soccer fields in Coal Miners Park. If the grant is received, getting an implementable design and accurate cost will be the next step in moving toward fund-raising and budgeting for new soccer fields.

Trails



The **Bicycle Skills Trail** has been expanded at Coal Miners Park coordinated by former Board member Paul Otsu and Andy Baranovic with assistance, mostly volunteer, from the International Mountain Bike Association and its local chapter Pedal United. The single track trail is designed for beginner to intermediate bikers in hopes to build skills and to provide an addition to the multi-use trails in the City. Work continues on the trail to include berms on corners, wide banked switchbacks, easy gradient climbs, rollers on the downhill and one roll in hill for downhill. Additional bicycle skill trails were built on the south end of Rotary Park and within Creekside

Park.



The **Montana Conservation Corps (MCC)** made improvements on trails within the City limits, working for four days in the City limits, working for four days in the City. MCC worked for two days on the new trail at Beartooth Lane, one day at Creekside Park clearing trail and one day at Rotary Park working on culvert issues.

The Trails Committee is composed of Board members Dan Siefert, Bryan Romeijn and Corey Thompson.

Weed Control



Each year the Parks Board budgets for the spraying of noxious weeds in Coal Miners Park, Double Ditch Dog Park, Skate Park, Rotary Park and Lions Park.

Noxious weeds control on other public areas, including City property, and on private property are coordinated for the City by a contractor. Recent efforts have been underway with the Red Lodge High School Natural Resource class to identify and map noxious weeds in Coal Miners Park.