

CITY OF PLYMOUTH, WISCONSIN
TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY HALL, 128 SMITH STREET

OFFICIAL MINUTES

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call:** Mayor Pohlman called the meeting to order. On the call of the roll, the following were present: Diane Gilson, Jeff Tauscheck, Dave Herrmann, Angie Matzdorf, Mike Penkwitz, John Nelson, Greg Hildebrand, and John Binder. Also present: City Administrator/Utilities Manager Tim Blakeslee, Police Chief Ken Ruggles, Deputy Police Chief Matt Starker, Director of Public Works Cathy Austin, Electrical Operation Manager Ryan Roehrborn, Assistant Administrator/Community Development Director Jack Johnston and City Clerk Anna Voigt.

2. **Approve the Minutes from December 10, 2024:** Motion was made by Nelson/Penkowitz to approve the minutes from December 10. A unanimous aye vote was cast. Motion carried.

3. **Initial Discussion on Dogs in Parks:** Police Chief Ruggles explained that is currently City's practice to allow dogs in parks. The City has constructed a dog park at Stayer park and have dispensers for bags to help people clean up after the dogs. Unfortunately, the City's Ordinances are out of date when it comes to dogs. There are two sections in the ordinance that restricting dogs in city parks. This places the Police Department in a no man's land regarding enforcement. There haven't been to many complaints regarding dogs in parks. The complaints are usually not related that the dogs are in the park, but the behavior of the dog in the park. Staff recommends changing the two sections to allow canines in city parks provided the dogs are kept on leashes and prohibited from harassing, biting or interfering with other visitors within the park. Mayor stated he can see where the Police Department is in a quandary of enforcing the code. It can be confusing to the department and to the public. Mayor asked if the in dog park they could still let the dogs off the leash since it is fenced in? Ruggles stated yes he would agree it could be an exception. Some of the wording needs to be finalized by the attorney. Blakeslee added once staff gets direction from the committee will move forward with Attorney Fieber to create an Ordinance to present to Council. Hildebrand agreed that they should be able to run in the dog park as long as they are being watched. Matzdorf asked if it is in the budget to have more signage at the parks? Blakeslee stated currently it is not in the budget but if it is needed staff can price it out and present it to Council. Matzdorf asked if dogs will be allowed in cemeteries also? Ruggles stated that the intent is to only change the Ordinance for city parks. He added its up to the committee if it should be added. Gilson asked if the dogs will be muzzled? Ruggles stated it is currently ordinance that dangerous dogs be muzzled when off the owner's property. If a dog is deemed vicious it is not allowed in the City of Plymouth. Nelson suggested the dogs only stay on the paved paths in cemeteries. Penkwitz asked if dogs should stay on paved paths in parks in case of a dog biting someone. Ruggles stated if the was deemed vicious or dangerous it would be up to the dog owner to muzzle the dog whenever it leaves the owners property. Penkwitz asked what if the dog bites someone while leashed in the park. Ruggles stated that it would be handled the same way if the dog was walking on the sidewalk with the owner, the dog would be in violation of the vicious dog ordinance. The owner is liable for the dog. Starker explained the process of a vicious vs dangerous dog if they bite someone. Penkwitz asked if there were a lot of report of dog bites? Ruggles stated no there are not a lot. Ruggles added a

comment about grassy areas vs paved areas. He stated that many dog owners take dogs to the park specifically to get them off paved surfaces like sidewalks. Starker added Thursday nights during the band people have their dogs and limiting dogs to the paved path might hurt attendance. Ruggles added that they would like to continue the exemption for service animals. Matzdorf asked if the ordinance will have a certain length for the leashed dogs? Ruggles stated yes, it is already stated in ordinance for 6 ft unless deemed dangerous then it shortens to 4 ft. Hildebrand suggested having exceptions in the ordinance regarding cemeteries for example when there is a funeral or a visitation, they can go off the paved path. Binder asked what the definition of leash is? If someone brings their dog to the park to play frisbee golf can someone tie the dog to a tree and go about their game? Ruggles stated it needs to be leashed under the control of a person. The leashed section of the ordinance requires it to be under the control of a person who is capable of controlling that dog. Matzdorf added the Council can revisit the ordinance if people aren't picking up after their dogs or something needs to be changed. Mayor Pohlman stated the ordinance will come back to Council at a later date.

4. **Adjourn:** Motion was made by Hildebrand/Matzdorf to adjourn the meeting. A unanimous aye vote was cast. Motion carried.