

City Council Considers Park Hours

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Kodiak's city parks could start having hours of operation in the future. Currently parks like Baranof and East Addition are open all day, every day, regardless of the season. But vandalism and complaints from nearby neighborhood residents prompted the Kodiak City Council to discuss possible hours of operation.

During Tuesday's work session, Police Chief T.C. Kamai said he and the police department definitely support restricting late night use at the parks, but by no means intend to make these public places less public.

"The police department has no interest in making our parks and our public spaces unavailable to folks who want to go there and enjoy it. But we have noticed trends over time of criminal behavior and malicious activity taking place in our parks, and I think the arson of our ice rink is probably the clearest example of that. So in an effort to better manage our parks and preserve those facilities for the public's use we think it's important for council to consider imposing curfew hours on the parks or closure hours if you will."

Kamai said many public parks are in neighborhoods and the police department often responds to noise complaints from nearby residents about activity going on in the parks. He said if there were set hours things could be handled easily by asking folks in the park to leave or citing them for not obeying posted hours.

Parks and Recreation Director Charlie Powers said set hours would also help him better staff and monitor the parks.

"Particularly the parks that are a high focus area, Baranof Park, East Addition Park, a person staff, we could schedule those hours where we have a person that's making rounds and is a point of contact for the public while they're using parks. So from a staffing standpoint and an asset management standpoint it's a good thing."

Originally, city staff recommended year-round hours of 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. However, Councilman John Whiddon, who lives near Baranof, said he often sees folks exercising on the track well before 6 a.m., especially in the summer.

The Parks and Recreation Board suggested seasonal hours that would allow for more park usage during the summer when daylight is longer and Councilman Terry Haines said he definitely supports that idea.

"Well I would be interested to know what nearby residents like John would think about these hours, but it

seems to me that in the summertime one of the great things about living here is that you can work until 9 p.m. at night and then go barbecue starting at 10 p.m. and expect to have a couple of hours. I just hate to cut some of our population out of park access because we are Alaska we have that different schedule. And on the same time, in the dead of winter I can hardly imagine most people wanting to be there at 8 p.m.”

One suggestion that was brought up was setting individual hours per park, but City Manager Aimee Kniazowski said the council should keep in mind that they have more parks than just Baranof or East Addition.

“It’s North End Park and South End Park and places where people go and work and they’re up to no good, so you have to be aware of that. So I think a universal approach for all the facilities is probably a good way to go. .”

Most council members liked the idea of opening parks from 5 a.m. until 11 p.m. in the summer and 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. in the winter. No final decisions were made, and it wasn’t clear when the seasonal start dates would be.