

MUSKEGON



West Michigan's Shoreline City
www.shorelinecity.com

McGraft Park Disc Golf Plan

June 2018

Thank you to all of the disc golfers who have and continue to offer help with the course at McGraft Park. The city appreciates the outpouring of support and the passion for our park system. It is also worth noting that the city has not received complaints about disc golf players or the presence of a disc golf course at McGraft Park. In fact, the opposite is true: staff continue to receive comments in support for the sport and the course. The city is committed to finding a solution where a challenging disc golf course can be accommodated within the city limits, and we appreciate being able to work with our citizens to sustain the natural, cultural and recreational resources of our community.

The city received a report on the potential risk for oak wilt from Dr. Roberts of MSU in early June, and the report is included for public information. After reviewing the park with Dr. Roberts, staff hoped to be able to open at least a portion of the course once the recommended minor amount of trimming was completed. As Dr. Roberts noted, he is not a disc golf player so we requested input on the fairways from a player who knows the course. Staff wanted to understand the envelope associated with each fairway, and during a site visit, the player educated staff on the challenge of the course as well as the very wide ranges used in throwing the discs. The amount of tree trimming needed is significantly greater than originally thought and will greatly increase exposure to the beetles that spread the oak wilt disease.

The trees within the park have not been pruned on a regular schedule for quite some time, and this has created a situation where more damage from errant discs is likely. It has also become clear that a few trees would require enough trimming to severely stress the tree so staff are now seeking advice from an avid disc golfer for relocating a few of the fairways. A side benefit may be to save a large number of errant hits to one of the buildings on site which has suffered quite a bit of damage in the short time since it was rehabilitated. Staff will be meeting on site with two golfers to review the fairways that need to be revised.

Staff continue to educate themselves on the oak wilt disease which is causing more concern for our old oak forest. Any tree trimming in the warm season when temperatures achieve 45 degrees and above is likely to attract the beetles who spread this disease, and given the amount of trimming needed, our forest is at significant risk.

The city's plan is to keep the course at McGraft closed for the summer and fall months of 2018 until trimming is safe again. In the meantime, staff will dedicate effort within McGraft to treat erosion, revise the course as needed, and repair turf that has been significantly damaged by the high use of the course. The goal is to protect our trees, care for this important park, and have an improved disc golf course to open in 2019. Other locations for a disc golf course are also being considered, and staff will work alongside the players to determine the best location, whether that is McGraft or some other city park.

In an effort to further reduce the risk of introducing oak wilt in Muskegon, staff are also beginning an education campaign on safe practices for tree trimming companies. Staff are reviewing ordinance language from other areas and think this education campaign is needed to supplement any future tree trimming ordinance. Partnering with the companies who do this work will increase chances to save the oak forests within our city.