

**City of Falcon Heights
Parks & Recreation Commission
Minutes
Monday, May 12, 2014
6:30 p.m**

In Attendance:

Christina Erickson Gordon Strom Mary Hannon Jacobson
 Liz Asmus Dave Thomas Michael Breen
 Cari Lee
 Staff Michelle Tesser Staff Tim Pittman Council Liaison Chuck Long
Guest: City Forester, Andy

1. Call to Order - 6:35 pm
2. Any corrections to March minutes? Approval of March meeting minutes.
3. Public Works Report - Tim Pittman – Tim is absent tonight
4. Update on Park Improvement Plan and Council Review

Chuck: Powerpoint was shown to the Council by Candace. Presentation was very similar. The Council got a hard copy of the report, which was the same as she gave the commission. Candace is almost done with the final version of the report; it will then be reviewed by the Council. On June 4th there is a workshop with the Council and the Parks Improvement Plan is on the agenda. The council will go through it closely and determine some suggestions and recommendation to the Parks and Rec commission.

Curtiss field may be the priority. An important point might be the long term vision of this park.

The pond is being fixed, the flooding issue is being re-engineered and will begin right after the State Fair. The area where the hockey rinks are will be torn up and under - ground holding tanks will be placed there to allow the water to seep into the soil more slowly. The field will be regraded, and there will be a fence around the pond. The rest will be up for this committee to determine.

Maybe a basketball court in the summer can be a hockey rink in the winter?

Will these tanks ever have to be accessed once they are buried? Not likely, or there will be other means of access. They are prepared to have to access it another way.

A hatch or vacuum design can be done to provide any access needed.

How much of Curtiss field will be revamped? It could be the whole park. Some of the amenities are reaching the end of their useful life. This is yet to be decided.

Assure the Council understands the Commission is committed and will recognize the financial commitment is worthwhile. Chuck will communicate that message to the council. Candace will need to submit a more specific plan as well for implementation.

5. Should we have a workshop for our parks and rec commission? To develop goals and objectives over the coming years? The city council can give us directions – but do we want to spend some time making up our own goals and objectives for the coming year?

Set a date for a workshop at the next meeting and determine goals. P & R has a set of goals and objectives, so would we be expanding on these?

We should set some goals for the next 2 years. Ideas that will help us be proactive. It seems like a good idea. There are opportunities for partnerships for gardening, or develop some community building options that help improve the parks. The Council will probably want a comprehensive park plan moving forward and this may help us do that.

A subcommittee could be formed to consider grants and investigate sources of revenue. For example, MN wild opportunities for hockey nets. We can work with Michelle to find the opportunities and submit. Some of these may dovetail with the park improvement plan. Trails can fit too. Michelle does a lot of grant writing, and these need to go through Michelle and Bart always – as this is city business. We have to assure there are no conditions that we are unable to fulfill.

Rather than forming a subcommittee – how about people just bring their ideas? Subcommittees have to fall under open meeting laws. Might be better to add revenue development to our agendas as a commission. When found, forward to Michelle to review.

6. City Forester Update – Andy

Removals of ash trees are done. This is the last year of the 2 year DNR grant. Stumps ground in another week. Contractor has trees that did not survive – the tree's are under warranty, and he and Tim are having a hard time getting a hold of the contractor. Contractor is now with a new company, but the contract should still be fulfilled. St. Croix was bought out by Instagreen.

One tree pulled at Curtiss – 3-4 yet to be pulled. But may not pull too many out because of the future changes to the park. One tree pulled at Grove.

Grant money tapped out? For now. Decided early on to work on 45 trees a year and replacing over a period of years. St. Paul and MPLS are pulling large stretches of ash tree down, we are doing it in smaller chunks over a number of years.

Andy is choosing the trees to remove. He is spreading out the removal, and will now begin to take from boulevards, even when the nearby homeowners don't want the tree removed. He has deferred for residents as long as he could.

Gordon: Have you completed a city wide master plan? There is a master map which shows where all the trees are. This is being updated, but that inventory is not up to date. It is 10 years old. He will have to go back and re-inventory the tree status in the community. He may plan to redo sections in certain years. No city wide master tree plan is reliable at this point.

The available planting space list is not up to date either, it looks like there is lots of room for planting but this is not accurate. For example, overhanging from other trees or a utility conflict make them not available for planting. Since the inventory isn't accurate, it is hard to make decisions from home or office.

All of the decision making in the parks is done by Andy walking the parks and making decisions.

Residents have asked about replanting, but we don't want to put in trees that will be torn out. At community park the issue is the amenities.

At Community park, the structure of some of the trees is poor - these trees need to be cabled for safety and to support poor branch attachments.

Mary: Is it worth it to treat some of the ash trees at Community park, until new trees grew in?

Andy: That would depend on the decision of the council.

Mary: What would you recommend?

Andy: The city would probably need to have a levy or raise taxes to treat the trees, and keep them longer. The decision has been to remove and replace. If we were to treat something, it would be to treat the trees at the park – but we would have to justify that we are treating park trees but not boulevard trees. We made a decision to go down the road of remove and replace, since we made the decision we have to follow it.

The chemicals are not a cure, just a delaying tactic.

Pruning can keep the ash trees safe too. Even though the trees are dying we have cursory management.

More trees on the Roselawn side of the parking lot in Community Park would be a good idea too, to provide canopy closure for parking.

What is happening with Cleveland Blvd? New Princeton Elm is planted there. Containerized elm, is planted there. Bound and burlap tree's have struggled to live there. These trees have done well in other parts of the city. Tim will water when needed.

What are your plans for the rest of the season?

Pruning is quite caught up. Refocusing now on areas that have a lot of deadwood. Tree trimming to assure emergency vehicles to pass. Stump grinding yet to occur, and some smaller projects. Some replacements yet to do this spring.

Residents need to know that the city will fix the holes left from removed ash trees.

Anything else? Grove could get a new pine where one was removed. This may be replaced. Tim gives Andy guidance, because maintenance is an important part of this. We would need a volunteer corp to keep these kind of beds attractive.

Do we have a garden club? There might be over in Grove. We might need this to maintain some garden spaces in parks.

On Larpenteur, things have run amuck – irrigation is unclear, maintenance is unclear. Some plants are salvageable and others are not. Does this fall under P & R? Probably not. They

may be replacing trees there, and determining what has survived in the planters. Might be wise to have a maintenance company.

Two red oaks on Hoyt were removed due to Oak Wilt.

7. School - may be revamping the western playground. Not sure yet, but Mary is going to be the playground representative for the school for the renovations in that playground. Just to let us know that is coming up.

In the park improvement plan, they said it would be nice for the parks to complement each other. So, it will be good to know what the school is doing.

Partnership being formed? Chuck and Bart had a meeting with the school principal and they are building a relationship. The report on the parks has been shared with the school, and to keep the communication open. It would be great to have a park the city and the school would love.

Other open items? None at this time.

Does the Council set the budget which determines how much we can do?

Not sure.

We have a fair amount of data on what it would cost to maintain and/or replace what it would cost for the parks.

Should we decide what we want in the park? But we need some idea of what kind of money we can spend. We also need to consider how the parks work together and complement each other.

Meeting Conclusions:

a. Summary of Decisions Made

1. Identification of grants, please bring to meeting and/or send to Michelle for review and fit with the city.
2. Have our own workshop after hearing from the Council.

b. Summary of Action Items

Chuck will send info via email from the Council meeting after their workshop with the city on June 4th,

c. Documents to Attach/PDF with these Meeting Minutes

- i. None at this time.

d. Incomplete Decisions which should be included on the next Agenda

- i. None at this time

Adjourned: 7:55 pm

Next meeting date: Monday, June 9th

Submitted by: Christina Erickson