



# MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

**DATE:** June 2, 2015

**CONSENT** \$\$ Future

**ITEM #** 4

**AGENDA ITEM:** Sunfish Lake Park Master Plan

**SUBMITTED BY:** Park Commission Sunfish Lake Fish Park Master Plan Subcommittee

**THROUGH:** Dean A. Zuleger, City Administrator

**REVIEWED BY:** Lake Elmo Park Commission

**SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:**

- Introduction of Item ..... City Administrator
- Report/Presentation.....City Administrator
- Questions from Council to Staff..... Mayor Facilitates
- Public Input, if Appropriate ..... Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion ..... Mayor & City Council
- Discussion..... Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion..... Mayor Facilitates

**POLICY RECCOMENDER:** Lake Elmo Park Commission

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Future Parkland Dedication Fund use to be determined through the Park Commission’s Annual Plan of Work.

**SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:** To affirm the Park Commission’s Master Plan for the future development of Sunfish Lake Park – specifically Area 3, which is not guided by agreement with the MN Land Trust. The recommended motion for this action is as follows:

*“Move to affirm the Park Commission’s “Guide to the Development and Usage of Sunfish Lake Park.””*

**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:** The 284 acre Sunfish Lake Park is considered the crown jewel of the Lake Elmo Park System and is noted for its unique oak savannah eco-system. When acquired by the community in the 1970s the park was placed in a conservancy state with the MN Land Trust that limits use to only passive activities in what is known as Area 1 and Area 2. With the advent of the Washington County landfill remediation project, the City was able to adjoin an area to the original park, known as Area 3 that was not constrained by MN Land Trust

specifications. In 2013, the City Council was requested to look into the expansion of use of Sunfish Lake Park, specifically for the purpose of mountain biking by an athletic team from Stillwater High School. In 1994, a similar request was made that was studied and subsequently denied (in Area 1 and Area 2) due to the constraints of the MN Land Trust conservation easement. The Park Commission was instructed by the City Council to develop a master plan for Sunfish Lake Park targeting expanded and new use opportunities in all areas.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** The Sunfish Lake Park Master Plan Subcommittee consisted of Park Commissioners Steele, Ames, Hartley and Frick. Over the course of seven months the Subcommittee thoughtfully studied current and potential uses in all three areas of the park with particular attention placed on the MN Land Trust Conservation Easement in Area 1 and Area 2 and new uses that would be possible in Area 3. The Subcommittee used the 2013 Park Survey, the topography of the park, conservation, tree preservation, and park access as guiding principles to develop a framework for advancing the use of the park as a whole.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION (SWOT):**

**Strengths:** Provides a framework for conservation preservation and new uses (specifically in Area 3) for the future;

**Weakness:** MN Land Trust restrictions limit use in Area 1 and Area 2 that lends itself to more active recreation like mountain biking and other adventure sports;

**Opportunities:** Area 3 is a blank canvass that has plenty of opportunity for development and meeting the recreational needs (per Park Survey) of Lake Elmo residents

**Threats:** Weather and pests threaten the health of the oak savannah, which could change the nature of the ecosystem.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Park Commission recommends:

***“Move to affirm the Park Commission’s “Guide to the Development and Usage of Sunfish Lake Park.””***

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Guide to the Development and Usage of Sunfish Lake Park