



DATE: October 12, 2021  
**DISCUSSION**

**AGENDA ITEM:** Sunfish Lake Park User Group Requests

**SUBMITTED BY:** Kristina Handt, City Administrator

**REVIEWED BY:** Marty Powers, Public Works Director

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**BACKGROUND:**

Ami Voeltz-Schakel has aided in assembling a community group that is focused on user expectations of the Sunfish Lake Park Trails. Ami established the group to work on removing confusion between different user groups as they use the park in the summer and winter seasons. The group made a presentation to the Parks Commission on April 19<sup>th</sup>. There was follow up action at the June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. Copies of minutes from both meetings are attached. The recommendation on the trail reroute to provide separation of bikers and hikers went to Council July 20, 2021 and was approved. As noted in the resolution and discussed at the meeting, signage needed to be installed by September 30<sup>th</sup> as public safety officials were challenged to find callers.

At the September 7<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, Ami and three other members spoke under public comment asking the council to separate bikers and hikers on the trails in Sunfish Lake Park. They also handed out suggested motions to the council:

**Sunfish Lake Park User Group-Request the City Council to approve the following motions:**

*These actions are supported by our 20+ participants in the Sunfish Lake Park User Group, City of Lake Elmo Parks Commissioners, MORC mountain biking group, the Sally Manzara Interpretive Nature Center, birders, horse riders, hikers, and dog walkers.*

1. Separate bikers and hikers in the park for safety” **Motion to add the following language on park communications and signage: No bikers on hiking trail. No hikers on biking trail**
2. Add trail signage on existing trail posts (see example attached) to indicate trail type and user information icons at all trailheads in the park. **Motion to add the following icon signs to existing map posts in the park and use a sandwich board for seasonal communications:**  
*Biking Trail –bikers only, no hiking*  
*Foot Trail –foot traffic only, no biking*  
Add a sandwich board for seasonal information for all users.

The note handed out at the September 7th meeting indicated the Parks Commission was in support of these motions, however staff would note they did not take any actions that support that statement. A motion at the April 19th meeting to designate trails was withdrawn.

The public works director noted one discussion had with the park commission and user group was there were only a couple of areas that were identified as problem areas- not all trails have issues. It was found in the discussion that the sliding hill was the main area of concern. We added “no biking” signs to the hill and rerouted the trail.

The other area identified was near the parking lot where all users entering and exited. This too was corrected by creating dedicated biking trails to and from the parking lot. Both dramatically reduced the opportunity for multi users to cross paths

**ISSUE BEFORE COUNCIL:**

Receive requests from Sunfish Lake Park User Group. Should any changes be made?

**PROPOSAL:**

A copy of the user group's presentation is included in your packet. This presentation is similar to the one given at the April 19<sup>th</sup> Parks Commission meeting which resulted in the trail re-routing approved in July. The group has 7 goals outlined in the presentation.

1. Passing the bike/foot traffic separation motion
2. Dogs on leash signage, communication and enforcement
3. Adding back in key hiking trails
4. Regain access to the lake with possible boardwalk project
5. Winter usage for skiers, bikers and foot traffic
6. Park maintenance improvements
7. User group continues to work collaboratively for park safety and improved user experience.

1. Passing the bike/foot traffic separation motion:

The user group is requesting new/additional signage to depict bikers are only allowed on bike trails and hikers only allowed on walking trails.

*Staff comments:*

What about other users such as horseback riders? Where are they allowed in the park?

What data exists to support this request? Will it be effective? There have been no reported biker v. hiker injury reports filed for years. There were previously no biking signs in the park. This did not stop bikers. When folks called to complain at city hall, as they have done numerous times in the last few years, there was no mechanism for enforcement. What will be different this time? Does the requested action accomplish the goal?

2. Dogs on leash signage, communication and enforcement:

The user group is asking to add 18x24 signs at the park entrances, add this to city communications and enforce when possible.

*Staff comments:*

As noted in the group's April 19<sup>th</sup> presentation, there are signs requiring dogs to be under restraint already located throughout the park.

The suggested signage requiring all dogs to be leashed is not consistent with city code referenced.

**§ 95.012 PROHIBITION OF DOGS AND CATS RUNNING AT LARGE.**

It shall be unlawful for any person who owns, harbors or keeps a dog or cat to allow the dog or cat to run at large in the city.

**At Large** is defined in City Code 95.004:

To be off the premises of the owner and not under the control of some person, either by leash or otherwise, but a dog or cat within an automobile of its owner or in an automobile of any other person with the consent of the dog's or cat's owner, shall be deemed to be upon the owner's premises.

As mentioned above and as noted in the presentation, enforcement is an issue. The city administrator gets all reports of dangerous dogs or potentially dangerous dogs. Of the couple reports we've had over the last few years, none of them have occurred in Sunfish Lake Park or any city park. Will the ask accomplish the goal?

3. Adding back in key hiking trails: city work with the MN Land Trust to add back in a few key foot trails.

*Staff comments:*

The city has been working with the land trust on the trails for the last couple of years as changes were made. The city held public meetings in 2018 and 2019 at both the parks commission level and city council level. The MN Land Trust initially denied the trail plan in early 2019 given the impact of added trails. They ultimately approved a plan to add new trails provided some existing trails were removed so that there was no net gain of trails in the park. Just this June, the Parks Commission voted in support of the trail re-route mentioned earlier which included removal of a redundant trail in order to allow for the creation of a separate trail at the entrance for bikers. The user group was represented at this meeting and involved in the discussion.

4. Regain access to Sunfish Lake with possible boardwalk project.

*Staff comments:*

This is a new request from previous asks at the Parks Commission. Staff would need more information to fully evaluate the boardwalk but will note that the loop trail was taken out as directed earlier this summer to allow for the added separate trail at the entrance. There is still a trail that goes out to the lake and back, just doesn't loop. The area where a proposed boardwalk would be located would be where a trail previously existed but was moved in order to avoid the wet area. They were told at the time a boardwalk or a new trail could be pursued. They choose the new trail at the time. So this would be an addition to walking areas.

5. Winter usage:

User group requests separate ski/foot traffic trails and signage in winter. They also request improved winter grooming on trails for safer and more consistent conditions.

*Staff comments:*

No changes to the winter maintenance or trails have been made. Any increase in impact is due to more people enjoying the park. Grooming is typically done after each snow storm. Provided the snow hardens after grooming, walkers do not have a significant impact on the trail condition. As noted in the pictures at the end of this report, there are signs in the park telling folks not to walk on groomed trails.

6. Park Maintenance Improvements:

The user group requests consistent mowing in the summer and grooming in the winter. The repair/replacement of broken benches. Clear and maintain currently unsafe intersections with low visibility.

*Staff comments:*

The trails are mowed two to three times as season. The custom benches will be removed after they become unsafe and replaced with benches that meet safety standards. The city does have an adopt a park program. If volunteers would like to help clear intersections they can contact the Public Works Director for more information.

7. User group continues to work collaboratively for park safety and improved user experience.

*Staff comments:*

If the council expects the user group to continue to be involved in recommending rules, improvements, and projects for Sunfish Lake Park, general guidance should be given about how the user group interacts with staff, parks commission and council in order to bring forth their ideas. Having a group meet outside of the public realm and yet having greater influence on the use of public resources is not advisable. It does not allow for everyone to be involved and be aware of those discussions or provide input. It places an additional burden on staff by now having to provide information and respond to requests from a group of residents other than the Parks Commission. What happens if the user group makes a recommendation to the Parks Commission that is not advanced by the Parks Commission? It appears from the record this year that they are allowed to bypass the process and go straight to Council. One suggestion would be to allow the user group to make an annual (similar to the Sally Manzara Nature Center) report to the Parks Commission. Identify the meeting dates and expectations well in advance so everyone can prepare.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

TBD

**OPTIONS:**

Provide direction to staff on next steps

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- April 19, 2021 Parks Commission Minutes
- June 21, 2021 Parks Commission Minutes
- Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation
- Pictures of existing signage

















THE CITY OF  
**LAKE ELMO** **Sunfish Lake Park**  
*Sunfish Lake Park is a City park, open to the public*

**Enjoy your visit** PARK HOURS 1/2 Hour before Sunrise to 1/2 Hour after Sunset

For more park info, or general questions  
visit: [www.lakeelmo.org](http://www.lakeelmo.org), or  
contact City Staff at 403-747-2960  
Office Hours: Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**NOTICE:** There are 2 distinct/intersecting trail types that  
intersect in this public park. Be cautious at intersections.

The best use of the trails are:  
1. Multi-Use: Walking, Horseback riding, and Skiing  
2. Single Track: Biking

**REGULATIONS:**

- No motorized vehicles allowed on the trails.
- Dogs MUST be kept on leash; pet owners are required to clean up after pets.
- No alcoholic beverages allowed.
- No glass containers.
- Horses: Trails closed to horses from first snow to May 15 during rainfall and when trails are wet.
- Horses NOT allowed on single track trails.

**SINGLE TRACK REGULATIONS:**

- NEVER ride, run, or walk on wet or muddy trails.
- Bikers must yield at all intersections & to non-bikers.
- Bikers must announce yourself when passing.
- When safe - use both brakes to prevent skidding.
- Leave no trace.
- Ride within your limits and control your bicycle.

**WINTER TRAIL REGULATIONS:**

- Walkers and Bikers must stay OFF ski trails.
- Bikers must YIELD to walkers.
- Horses: Trails closed to horses from first snow to May 15.
- ALL other regulations still apply.
- Trails may be slippery during Winter conditions.

**ALL dogs MUST be leashed and waste picked up.**

**1. Horses NOT allowed on Single Track Trails.**  
**2. No Horses from First Snow to May 15, OR when trails are wet.**

**Bikers must yield at intersections and to non-bikers.**

**No walking on Groomed Ski Trails.**

**WARNING!**  
Cars parked here are vulnerable to break-in.  
**DO NOT LEAVE VALUABLES IN YOUR CAR.**  
Call 911  
To report suspicious activity

**Prevent Skidding**  
Ride within your limits  
Control your bicycle.





Forever  
Protected



MINNESOTA  
LAND TRUST



Dogs must be  
leashed and waste  
picked up.



Please do not  
walk on groomed  
ski tracks

























## **City of Lake Elmo Parks Commission Minutes**

### **June 21, 2021**

**Members Present:** Commissioners- Weeks, Hoelscher, Kastler, and Rivera

**Staff Present:** City Planner- Prchal, Public Works Director- Powers

**The meeting was called to order by Weeks at 6:30 PM.**

Steve Schumacher has resigned. Andrew Hodges will be the new Parks Commission member.

#### **Approval of Agenda**

**Agenda was unanimously approved as presented 4-0.**

#### **Approval of Minutes**

**Weeks motioned to approve the April 19th, 2021 Parks Commission Minutes, Hoelscher provided a second with amendment;** discussion to add Hoelscher under Communications, item D. **Unanimously passed with correction 4-0.**

The May 2021 Meeting was cancelled.

#### **Public Comments**

None

#### **Deer Hunting in Sunfish Lake Park – Washington County**

Prchal provided background and went over the recommendations and conditions. Staff is asking the Parks Commission to review the County's proposal. Washington County will be utilizing Metro Bow Hunters for the population control deer hunt.

Dan MacSwain with Washington County addressed the goals and objectives, history, and park impacts. (Discussion involving Commission questions and concerns.)

**Hoelscher motioned to permit the hunting in Sunfish Lake Park that staff outlined and in accordance with what has been presented by Washington County including the conditions listed with the change of not shooting into the 100 foot area and that we modify the map to exclude the area around Fire Station #2; Kessler provided a second. No discussion, motion unanimously passed 4-0.**

#### **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Prchal provided a presentation for the Commission. (Discussion regarding a dog park, disk golf, trails, play equipment, and park use.)

**Weeks motioned to add into the CIP \$25,000 to be spend in the year 2023 for disk golf in Kliess Park, Hoelscher seconded; no discussion. Motion passed 4-0.**

Kessler motioned to recommend to council that \$25,000 be set aside to establish a civic square as priority one in 2023, Rivera provided a second; unanimously passed 4-0.

**Weeks recommend approval of the Parks CIP as presented with the addition of the amendment of the disk golf amenity at Kliess Park, Hoelscher send, passed 4-0.**

#### **Sunfish Lake Trail Reroute**

Prchal provided background on the trail reroute. (Commission discussion with Prchal, Tim, and Tony involving the trails, mapping, and signs.)

**Hoelscher motioned to approve trail reroute as show with the financial surety that the city requires and for the new maps and that overall the net trail delta zero;**

**Weeks provided a second.** Discussion continued about the trail reroute.  
**Approved 4-0.**

**Bike Repair Station – 2<sup>nd</sup> Location**

Prchal reviewed the three potential locations with the commission. **Weeks motioned to approve the location recommended near Inwood, Kessler provided a second, no discussion, approved 4-0.**

**Communications**

- a) Prairie in Lion's Park
- b) The new Trails and Park maps on the website is very good

**Meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM**

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Rebecca McGuire, Deputy Clerk**



## **City of Lake Elmo Parks Commission Minutes**

### **April 19, 2021**

**Members Present:** Commissioners- Weeks, Ames, Schumacher, Nightingale, Hoelscher, Kastler, and Rivera

**Staff Present:** City Planner- Prchal, Public Works Director- Powers

**The meeting was called to order by Weeks at 6:30 PM.**

#### **Approval of Agenda**

**Agenda was unanimously approved as presented 7-0.**

#### **Approval of Minutes**

**Weeks motioned to approve the February 17th, 2021 Parks Commission Minutes, Ames provided a second; discussion. Unanimously passed with the discussed typo correction 7-0.** The March 2021 Meeting was cancelled.

#### **Public Comments**

Ann Bucheck at 2301 Legion Ave: This spring one of the trees fell over in Legion Ave Park and is now floating in the standing water. You can access this park from Legion Lane and recommend the Parks Commission view the park in its current state. Thank you.

#### **Mike Zeno – Lions Park Volleyball Court Courtesy Rules Discussion.**

Mike Zeno at 4860 Jerome Ave N – Mr. Zeno is requesting the Parks Commission consider a courtesy rules sign for the volleyball courts at Lions Park. Residents in the area provided a list of courtesy rules for commission review at a later date. They would also like to see lights and another volleyball court constructed.

Discussion followed regarding the current lights by the court, requirement of a new sign and sign placement, court usage, court locations, reservations, common courtesy rules, and possibly adding courts to the CIP for future consideration.

**Ames motioned to have staff look into verbiage for a sign, Rivera provided a second.**

(Discussion: Hoelscher would like to see it follow park policy. Kastler recommends the rules be more specific to volleyball. Not parking on the grass is already a park regulation.) **Unanimously passed 7-0.**

#### **Sunfish Lake Park**

Ami Voeltz-Schakel at 9905 Tapestry Rd, Park Usage Community Group Representative for Sunfish Lake Park, provided a presentation on user experience, concerns, and solutions focusing on safety and clarifying user confusion.

Matt Orest at 7650 31<sup>st</sup> St N: Activity at the park has grown. Trails are bi-directional and users are allowed to use all trails. (Orest went into detail about the safety issues and proposed trail changes. Discussion followed inquiring about cost, number of days the work would take to complete, volunteer opportunity, and if the Landtrust required removing trails to be able to add trails.) Voeltz-Schakel recommended designated hiking and skiing trails in the winter.

Mary Frick at 2773 Lisbon Ave N: Dogs running off leash is an ongoing safety concern. (Frick commented on the groups concerns and incidents with the dogs.) The city ordinance for a dog running at large is stated as a misdemeanor, which is up to a \$1000 fine or 90 days in jail. We suggest placing doggie bag holders with leash law signs in the park. (Discussion

about the Sherriff's Department having no reports of hikers bitten in the park in the last 5 years and the need to make a report of any incidents.)

Voeltz-Schakel: Last thought is to update all the signage to reflect user guidelines for winter and summer, and noting that we would love to see the option of having sandwich signs and post signs.

Weeks questioned the conditions set in the contract with the Landtrust about the trails. (The Commission discussed the contract, trail maintenance, signs, and bringing a discussion to the Landtrust regarding potential trail changes.)

Public comments were heard by Tony Manzara located at 5050 Kirkwood, Mary Frick at 2773 Lisbon Ave N, Tim Wegner of Rosemont, Ann Bucheck at 2301 Legion Ave, Peter Sullivan at 1050 Tapestry Bend, Mike Zeno at 4860 Jerome Ave N, Susan Dunn at 11018 upper 333rd St N, and Trina Joyce of Minneapolis regarding the Landtrust contract, thanking Ami for bringing people together for a respectful discussion, ordinance, sign budget, trail location and measurements, who should be responsible for trail cost and how much, Mr. Wegner volunteering, questions on when users were allowed to be on the same trail and when bikers started being allowed in the park, importance of proper signage, trail erosion and maintenance, any reported accidents, welcoming the new parks commission members and thanking them for their service, the importance of the park continuing to be a nature preserve, and the consensus that trails should not be multi-user trails for the safety of everyone.

Ames mentioned that the commission is only a recommending body and the City Council has final vote.

**Weeks motioned for Ames to be liaison to the group, Hoelscher provided a second; unanimously approved 7-0.**

Ames motioned to recommend designated user trails to improve safety and minimize conflict to the City Council, Schumacher provided a second; discussion. Commission felt the motion was premature - motion withdrawn.

**Kastler motioned for the group to continue to work with Ames and focus in on the concepts provided, Ames seconded; Ames amended the motion to direct city staff to research the groups presented topics that will allow the commission to address safety concerns, Schumacher provided a second; Commission would like to see something solid before presenting it to Council and the Landtrust. Unanimously approved 7-0.**

### **Communications**

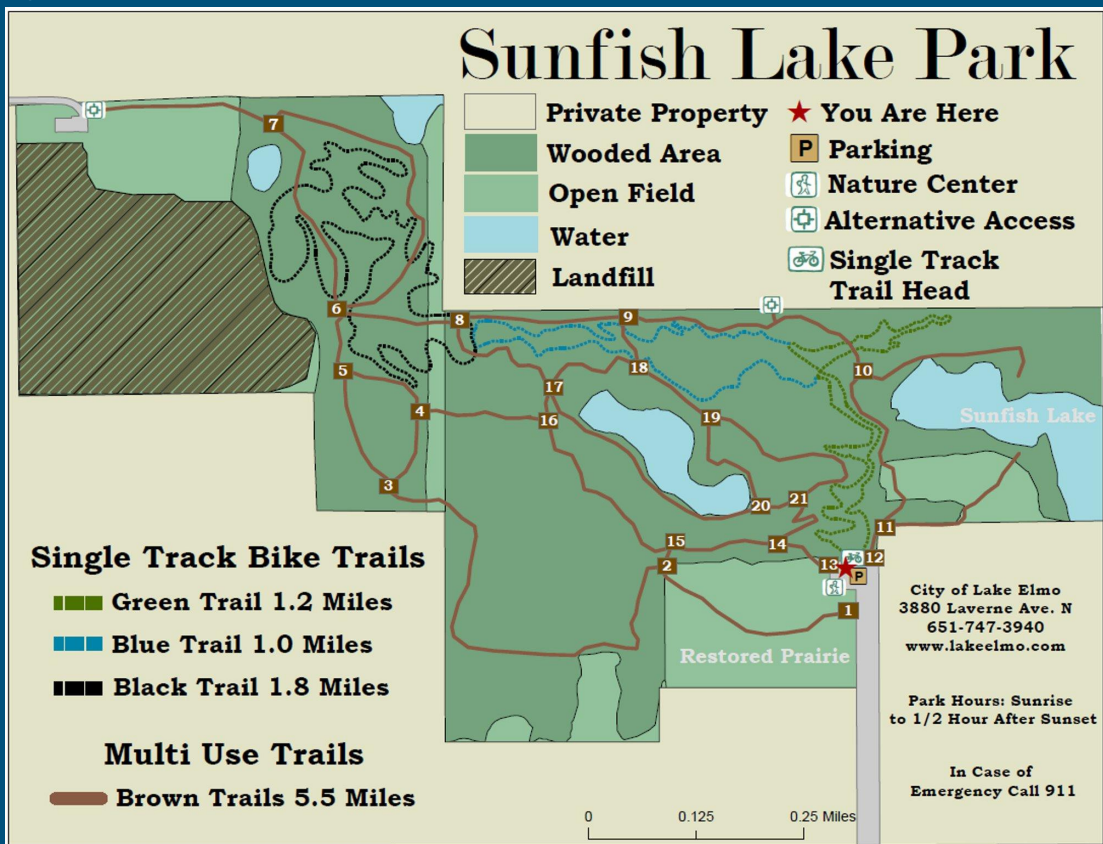
- a) May 6th APWA member's community service day. Powers found a few things that could be done.
- b) County Deer Hunt. County completed a fly over and it met the threshold for a hunt. Dan MacSwain from Washington County is getting his material together to see if any cities want to complete a joint hunt. The presentation would be this calendar year, most likely August in preparation for the fall deer hunt.
- c) Bee Keeping in Sunfish has been approved and the hives are set up.
- d) Schumacher and Hoelscher have been selected to serve on the CIP committee.
- e) Concession stands are now open.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:44 PM**

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Rebecca McGuire, Deputy Clerk**

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation

Lake Elmo City Council - 10/12/21





# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



- 20+ users of Sunfish Lake Park
- Since 2020
- Goals to collectively work to make the park safer and improve all user experiences in the park
- Plan to meet quarterly to continue working on our established goals

*Participants include:*

*Hikers, bikers, skiers, snowshoers, horse riders, birders, dog walkers, park commissioner, Stillwater Mountain Bike Team representative, MORC representative, SMINC representative, Friends of Lake Elmo's Sunfish Lake Park*

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



## GOALS FOR SUNFISH LAKE PARK

1. Passing the bike/foot traffic separation motion
2. Dogs on leash signage, communication and enforcement
3. Adding back in key hiking trails
4. Regain access to the lake with possible boardwalk project
5. Winter usage for skiers, bikers and foot traffic
6. Park maintenance improvements
7. User group continues to work collaboratively for park safety and improved user experience

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



**Request passing the bike/foot traffic separation motion**

**No bikers on foot traffic trails.**

**No foot traffic on biking trails.**

**Add to city communications and park signage.**

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



Dogs on leash communication,  
signs and enforcement

- Add 18 x 24 sign at park entrances
- Add to city communications
- Enforce when possible

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



## Adding back in key hiking trails

- 1/3 of hiking trails are abandoned
- Little or no input from citizens/users
- Limited access to viewing Sunfish Lake
- Trail loops do not flow well in areas
- Popular trail sections were abandoned
- There is not a zero net gain for the park, only for the development of the bike trails

Next step: City works with the Minnesota Land Trust to approve adding back in a few key foot trails.



# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation

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## Regain access to Sunfish Lake with possible boardwalk project

- Lake offers viewing of migratory birds, pond life, and access to water activities
- No easy viewing access to the lake and no loop hike around the lake
- Add abandoned trail segments and build a boardwalk
- Community driven project, including fundraising

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



## Winter usage

- Unsafe for foot traffic and skiers combined
- Many trail sections too narrow with low visibility for multi-use
- Grooming is not preserved for safe skiing with foot traffic
- Consider separate ski/foot traffic trails and signage in winter
- Improve winter grooming on trails for safer and more consistent conditions

# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation

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## Park maintenance improvements

- Consistent mowing in summer and grooming in winter
- Repair/replace broken benches
- Clear and maintain currently unsafe intersections with low visibility



# Sunfish Lake Park User Group Presentation



## GOALS FOR SUNFISH LAKE PARK



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