

# MINUTES

## City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Members Present:** Weis, Hartley, Steel, Silvernale, Nelson, Frick, Zeno, Hieptas

**Members Absent:** Ames

**Others Present:** Administrator Zuleger, Homestead HOA Representatives, Craig Allen (Gonyea), Jerry Mazzara (Engstrom), Jan Olinger, Mike Bouthilet, DPW

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weis at 6:31 PM.

### Approval of Agenda

**M/S/P:** Weis/Hartley: To add agenda item V.b. "Tree Planting at Sunfish Lake Park Area III". Approved as amended 7-0

### Approval of March 16, 2015 Minutes

**M/S/P:** Hartley/Steele: Approved as amended 7-0 adding that Commissioner Zeno was in attendance.

### Presentations

a. **Gonyea/ Wildflower Park** – Jerry Mazzara, representing Wildflower, and Craig Allen, representing Gonyea, presented their concept for a .71 acre shared park between the Wildflower and Village Preserve neighborhoods. The park will be more of a natural type play area using timbers, sand and themed-base landscaping. It will have a change in topography that may allow for some natural water features. There will be two pickle ball courts. The park will be connected by two miles trails and augment a 60 acre conservancy to the north. There are plans for a small shelter in the park. The park could also accommodate public art.

Commissioner Frick asked the developers about who would be using the parks. Mazzara noted the demographics of the planned developments and stated that the park would be used mostly by families.

Commissioner Zeno asked if the park / conservancy could connect (by trail) to the east to the high school. Mazzara noted that the HOA to the east (Fields) was not acceptable to that at this time, but it is a possibility in the future.

Commissioner Steele expressed his concerns about the overall size of the park noting the Sanctuary Park experience. Mazzara responded that the plan is to develop a spectacular tot lot for families. Administrator Zuleger noted that if you combine the 60 acre conservancy, the proposed tot lot, and the playground equipment at Lake Elmo Elementary you kind of create a

nice corridor concept for all ages. Commissioner Steele noted that he believed that more park space was needed for these densely packed areas and that this park was entirely too small.

Craig Allen noted that Gonyea had come to the Park Commission almost two years ago and noted that they would be allocated 15 acres of their southern land to Reid Park and that this was acceptable to the Park Commission. Commissioner Hartley said she seemed to remember that this was the direction that the Park Commission had given Gonyea.

Commission Hieptas inquired on how the park construction would be paid . Allen noted that (due to the land dedication by both developers), the costs would be borne by the Parkland Dedication Fund. Hieptas expressed concerned that there may not be enough funds to build each of these new parks. Mazzara explained how the trails from the conservancy would connect to the neighborhoods and the park.

Commissioner Zeno asked about curb cuts on the trails to accommodate cyclists. Mazzara noted that the curb cuts would be made to match the 8' surface of the trail. Commissioner asked about pickle ball noise. Commissioner Frick suggested that perhaps there could be a buffer of sorts.

Commissioner Hieptas inquired as to the likelihood that the buckthorn could be removed. Mazzara outlined the some of the strategy on clearing the land.

Commissioner Steele asked about the grade elevation change in the park. Mazzara noted that it was a 10' drop over 150' and the park would be equipped with ADA pathways. Allen noted that the Gonyea land dedication to Reid Park would be held in escrow and dedicated as their 3 development parcels come online. Commissioner Hieptas noted that in this instance she would rather see a cash contribution than the land dedication as parkland dedication funds in this instance. Administrator Zuleger noted that perhaps the Park Commission needed to have a policy discussion on when it was appropriate to take parkland dedication funds or land dedication. The Park Commission agreed by consensus to have the policy conversation later on in the agenda.

**M/S/P: Hartley/Hieptas: To approve the concept plan presented by Wildflower/Gonyea for the .71 acre park.**

Weis noted that he wanted to impress upon the developer to keep working on the connectivity to the neighborhoods to the northeast.

### **New Business – Homestead Park Plan Approval**

A contingent of residents from the Homestead HOA and their landscape architect Steve Masthey presented a power point plan to turn a City owned out lot (Outlot B) into a bee pollinator friendly area that would be compatible with other landscaping in the HOA. The HOA detailed a 3 option plan that would approve the project, allow the HOA to apply for a USDA

EQUIP Grant for bee preservation and commit to co-funding the project. The HOA noted that they had been maintaining the site for the City since 1998 at an estimated cost to the neighborhood of \$9200. The HOA noted that the benefits to the City included being the first Bee-Friendly project since the recently passed resolution, that there would be no resources required of public works. They also noted that the project would be of great benefits to public conservation and that their project could be used as a model.

The pollinator goals of the project include making sure something is blooming at all times from March to October, a variety of colors, a diverse ecosystem and a multi-species friendly pollinator environment (bees, butterflies, moths, etc.).

The HOA then presented three funding options for the City as an investment strategy. Option A was for the City to contribute \$16050 + the cost of future maintenance at roughly \$2,500 per year. Option B was to contribute \$25,915 for installation, future plantings and no future maintenance, and Option C was to fully fund both past maintenance, current installation, future plantings, and all maintenance by the Homestead HOA. The \$2500 a year maintenance represents weeding/irrigation repair/ mulching.

Commissioner Frick asked what the public benefit would be for the City to be involved. The HOA responded that this project would be a beautiful “viewing piece” in one of the important entrance ways into the City.

Commissioner Steele commended the HOA for their work and for advancing the bee friendly initiative. However, he would like to see some passive trail system developed for the public with some signage. The HOA reminded the Commission that they were bound by the conservation easement put forth by the MN Land Trust and that signage would need to be a certain size (not very big). Steele and Frick were insistent on public access with a public benefit. Commissioner Hartley asked why the plan had changed from the previous presentation. The HOA responded that it had amended its plan based on the City’s new bee safe policy. Commissioner Hieptas supports Option B with a mowed path the public could use.

Commissioner Frick expressed some hesitation of support in that it could set precedent for other areas in the City noting her own neighborhood as an example. She noted that the Park Commission had to determine if project like these were a priority. Commissioner Steele expressed his desire to look at these on a case by case basis and not as anything that would set a precedent.

Commissioner Hartley felt blindsided by this proposal and noted that at a minimum the City should list this area as a pollinator habitat on the website for the public to view. Commissioner Steele felt that this was a reasonable proposal.

**M/S/P (6-1, Hartley opposed): To recommend \$25,915 (Option B) be expended to the Homestead HOA for the installation of a pollinator area on City property (Outlot B) and that HOA understands that the property be subject to future public use / benefit. Further, the City**

**supports the application of the USDA EQIP Grant and the HOA can use all obtained grant funds for use on Outlot B.**

Commissioner Hartley reported on the April 25, 2015 Tree Planting for Area III at Sunfish Lake Park. She has obtained the trees from the Washington County Conservation District. The planting will begin at 10:00 AM with the help of some Cub Scouts and other community volunteers. The cost of the trees was \$149.40. The lilac trees that were stolen last year will be replaced with this planting.

**M/S/P Weis, Steele: to approve an expenditure of \$149.40 to plant trees in Sunfish Lake Park Area III.**

### **Old Business**

### **Forestry Plan Update**

Commissioner Frick noted that progress is slow on the forestry plan and based on Mr. Kunde's March 11, 2015 report we are still waiting for some information from the MN Land Trust on the details of the operations and the US Forest Service. The MN Land Trust is very cautious in their approach with this forest. Kunde will be asked to bring an update at the May meeting.

Commissioner Frick noted that she had noticed that the tree marking toward the process of falling hazardous trees had begun on the west side of the park, but no other progress has been made. Commissioner Hartley and other Commissioners expressed deep frustration that no activity has been accomplished with the falling of hazardous trees. Administrator Zuleger noted that he will get right on the project and get bids out.

### **Fiddlers Barn Update**

Chairman Weis noted that he was waiting on a quote on how much it would take to move and reassemble the barn. He also noted that in May, the Park Commission would be receiving a proposal from a Mr. Tony Manzzara on a donation for a nature center at Sunfish Lake Park in memory of a family member. A concept was handed to the Commission for their initial review.

### **Sunfish Lake Park Master Plan**

Commissioner Steele noted that everyone had ample time to review the plan and asked if there were any additions. The Commission, by consensus, noted that it was appreciative of the work that had been completed.

**M/S/P Weis, Hartley: To approve the document entitled "A Guide to the Development and Usage of Sunfish Lake Park"**

## **Tablyn Park**

Per the 2015 Plan of Work, the Commission turned its attention to the refurbishment and outfitting of Tablyn Park. A detailed site map was provided to the Commission for their review. Commissioner Steele led a discussion of where and what type of lighting should be provided and whether more of the sledding area should be cleared– especially on the sledding hill. Chairman Weis noted that he thought providing some lighting down by the playground features could discourage unwanted behavior in the park. Administrator Zuleger noted that he had talked with some Washington County Deputies and they felt a gate was not needed at this site and that they continue to patrol the park regularly.

Commissioner Heiptas/Hartley/Nelson engaged in a conversation on what kind of park equipment would set this park apart from others. A piece of equipment called the Rushmore was discussed.

Commissioner Steele suggested moving a light to the west side of the parking lot to expose an area of the park that has had problems and perhaps installing a surveillance camera. Commissioner Zeno was concerned that we not cast too much light and suggested looking at the lights of the Prairie Ridge Office Building as an example.

Mike Bouthilet, DPW, noted that rather than a portable warming house he thought a permanent gazebo with sides that could be attached in the winter might work. There was consensus to look into this. Commissioner Hartley asked about the possibility of bathrooms. Bouthilet noted that we might need to put holding tanks in and on top of the hill for access to those who service sewer. There would be no way for a pump truck to get back where a bathroom might go.

Chairman Weis encouraged the Park Commission to send their comments to Administrator Zuleger within a week for how they would like to proceed with remodeling Tablyn Park.

## **Easton Village Park / Parkland Funds vs. Land Dedication**

A general discussion ensued about when the Park Commission should 1) Determine when a new park should be built; and 2) when the Park Commission should receive parkland dedication funds rather than land from new development. For the sake of conversation, Commissioner Steele suggested a 50% of development build out threshold as a trigger for when a park should be developed. Commissioner Hartley suggested the number might need to be lower based on proximity to other parks. Administrator Zuleger noted that the Parks Commission has adopted a 2015 Plan of Work that has determined current park investment and development. Chairman Weis/Hartley noted that perhaps the investment in new parks should be considered during the fall planning and C.I.P. process. Commissioner Steel likes this approach in that it would allow each project to be measured against other competing priorities. Commissioner Steel / Frick also noted that they wished for more information on development, so they could be more

purposeful in the planning. Administrator Zuleger asked for some specifics on what more information would be needed to aid in the process.

Commissioner Hieptas inquired as to when it was best to take funds vs. land as she was concerned that, based on recent history, the funds available wouldn't go very far. The process on how Gonyea dedicated 15 acres of land to Reid Park was once again discussed. Commissioner Steele noted that these decisions have to be a case by case basis and integrated into the overall park plan. This item will be added to a future agenda. Commissioner Frick would like more information to be provided to the Park Commission earlier on in the process with respect to new development. Administrator Zuleger noted that he will be asking Park Commissioners for a menu of items that they would wish to see from staff.

### **Staff Reports & Commission Updates**

Commissioner Frick reported on the May 16, 2015 Sunfish Lake Family Nature Event being coordinated by Judith Blackford. Some of the activities that will take place will be guided bird watching, a presentation from the Warner Nature Center, clay nature impressions courtesy of Council Member Jill Lindgren, a geocaching presentation, a presentation by the Washington Conservation District on Water Quality and education vignettes on the various plants and animals found in the park. Volunteer will be needed. Commissioner Hartley inquired whether the Master Gardeners had been contacted. Administrator Zuleger noted that he would be helping with the advertising. Commissioner Frick asked if there could be a donation made to the Warner Nature Center for bringing the bird (expected to be an owl) to the event.

**M/S/P Weis/Hieptas                      To donate up to \$200 to the Warner Nature Center for their participation in the May 16, 2015 Sun Fish Lake Family Nature Event.**

Chair Weis noted that he appreciated all the help he received from Alyssa MacLeod and noted that he hoped her position would be filled. The Commission concurred by consensus.

**M/S/P Weis, Steele                      To encourage the City Council to fill the vacancy for Taxpayer Relations Coordinator**

**Commissioner Steele suggested breaking up the agenda a bit to reduce the length of the meeting.**

**Meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,

Dean A. Zuleger, City Administrator

