

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Wednesday, March 17, 2014

Members Present: Weis, Hartley, Ames, Zeno

Members Absent: Frick, Hietpas, Nelson, Silvernale, Steele

Others Present: Administrator Zuleger, Planning Commissioner Larson, Council Member Reeves, Taxpayer Relations & Communications Coordinator MacLeod, PWS Bouthilet

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weis at 6:34 PM.

Approval of Agenda

M/S/P: Ames/Hartley: Approved 4-0

Approval of February 19, 2014 Minutes

M/S/P: Ames/Weis: Approved 3-0, Hartley Abstain

New Business

a. Gonyea North Concept Plan (Zuleger)

Zuleger identified on the map where the new developments (Gonyea North and Wildflower Shores) would be located. Craig Allen from Gonyea addressed the commission. Plan was brought to the planning commission on March 10, and now presented to the park commission to get a global input on the plan. Allen's understanding is that they would like to emphasize some of the existing parks. Gonyea did not include a park in the design, because of the anticipated green space north of the development. Across the street will be larger development with pool and clubhouse with a tot lot, in which residents of Gonyea North can utilize. Gonyea owns the land that abuts Reid Park, and suggests expanding Reid as their portion of parkland dedication (in lieu of a park in Gonyea North).

Weis asked what the target demographic is. Allen replied that it was typically young families; average home prices would be in the mid-\$400s. The commissioners expressed concerns about trails and connectivity, as well as a shared park on the other side of Lake Elmo Avenue. Ames thought that without a crossing control mechanism that a park across Lake Elmo Avenue is not the best or safest idea. They also questioned the trail connectivity into other neighborhoods as part of the overall park and trail plan. Hartley asked if there would be a parking available at the clubhouse/swimming pool and if it would be accessible for residents in this development. Allen confirmed that Gonyea North residents would not have access to the clubhouse; only the tot lot. Zeno discussed safety concerns on biking trails going against traffic.

Zuleger stated what they liked about the Gonyea development is that they are willing to give more of that land to expand Reid Park (walkable from downtown). Hartley responded that if the Wildflower development did not go in, she is concerned that there would be no park available to young children in the development.

Ames would like to see more consideration for connectivity; expressed concerns crossing at busy streets on Lake Elmo Avenue and Hwy 5. Zuleger pointed out that there will be a stop light at the intersection of Hwy 5 and Lake Elmo Avenue by August.

Weis said that he's not in favor of adding more parks but is concerned about the nearest park availability, based on the park survey which indicated that proximity to parks is important. He would like to see them work with the neighboring development.

Gonyea companies have had top builders in the last 4 years.

b. Wildflower at Lake Elmo Concept Plan (Zuleger)

The Wildflower concept includes a unique design from Engstrom, guided with larger lots and with a courtyard plan. Engstrom has designed the Fields of St. Croix, The Forest, and Cloverdale Farms. The Wildflower site is 101 acres plus 21 acres for joint meetings with Fields of St. Croix. Engstrom explained that the farm field would be converted into into large storm water collection area, and all stormwater would be able to be kept on site. The lower portion of the development would be association maintained units targeted for singles and empty nesters.

Engstrom talked about a conservancy, which would include a large, shared area with native plants; a landscape architect would work with individual homeowners to incorporate native plants into their own landscape. He discussed conservancy ownership options, which could include the City, the homeowners association, or an outside organization.

Engstrom pointed out the proposed trail connections. Ames observed that the plan primarily served residents and was concerned about the lack of connectivity outside of the neighborhood. It is the commission's desire to ensure that incoming developments are prepared to connect with surrounding existing developments. They would particularly like to see some connectivity to Tana Ridge.

Hartley shared that she thought the open green spaces in the development were wonderful and that future residents would really enjoy it. Commissioners agreed that the conservatory area is beautiful.

Zuleger prompted the commission to consider commenting alongside the planning commission's thought to include a common shared park/small gathering space between the two developments. Larson mentioned that the planning commission talked about the central cul-de-sac going through, and suggested a trail linkage that would go between some of the houses.

Zuleger asked the commission to point out their main issues with connectivity. Primary concerns were, accessibility to park land, connectivity to the north and the east and to highway 5, and also connectivity to the high school. Zuleger identified potential points of connectivity using Leighton between Gonyea and Engstrom to lead to a trail on 39th that would connect to the Village Parkway. The trail would provide access to the Old Village and include great connectivity to Reid Park.

c. Priority Park Action Item Discussion (Weis)

Ames/Weis Table to shelve item 4c until next meeting when more members are present. 4-0.

Old Business

a. Oak-Land Park JPA (Zuleger)

Zuleger presented the commission with the first draft of the joint powers agreement, which included basic principles. The JPA would now go to the lawyers to redraft some of the language. Changes would include a modification to article 1. Zuleger prompted the commission to concentrate on article 1 and 2, which is the heart of the JPA. The contract will be presented to Council and the School Board on April 1.

The city park area would be located at the northeast area of the school grounds. Ames questioned if the agreement would eliminate any future opportunity to create an official trail off the west side of the property that would make a connection into Cimarron. Zuleger clarified that the JPA is a document to allow the two entities to work together. The City will work with district to determine legal property lines on parcel, and designate rules and regulations for park usage. Master plan will have to be given to the district by September of 2014.

Commissioners expressed concern about clause 2.6 & 2.7, regarding the district's permission to request additional improvements/needs, going forward. Zuleger didn't consider it an issue after walking the grounds. Ames felt that the language does not belong and added that the commission is always open to requests; he suggested removing the verbiage to not intimate an obligation.

Ames inquired about safety and security. His concern was that the agreement stated that the City was responsible for safety and security of the park, and questioned whether developing a park would open up the area up to inappropriate actions, which the City would then be responsible for. Zuleger explained that safety was already under the City's jurisdiction because they provide the policing for the facility. It is believed that cleaning up the park would deter and reduce those behaviors.

Weis asked if any timeline was indicated by when the park must be developed. Zuleger anticipated within a year after the plan is submitted in September.

Motion made that they would like to work out matters of safety and security and remove items 2.6 and 2.7 replace with general statement that allows school to ask park commission for funds on as need basis.

M/S/P: Hartley/Ames. Motion amended to include adding language that allows for reciprocal funding. Approved 4-0.

Weis stated that this partnership is a great example of the city working with the schools and looking toward what we want it to look like in the future.

Bouthilet asked about parking opportunities. Zuleger responded that parking would be on the south end of the community park, just north of the tennis courts. Details will continue to be worked out with the operation agreement.

M/S/P: Weis/Ames: Approved 4-0

b. MCPA Tree Planting Update (Zuleger)

Hieptas has contracted St. Croix Tree Service and has not received anything back. It will be moved to next month agenda.

c. LERT Update (Weis)

Weis provided an update. Johnson drafted a letter of intent to Washington County stating that they are serious about putting in a bike trail. This is the first step in the matter. Weis added that the committee is looking at other avenues of funding as well through Met Council. Next steps are to figure out first steps of other avenue of funding.

d. Follow Up on 27th St. Access to LEPR (Weis)

Weis wanted to follow up on the issue to ensure it didn't fall off the radar. Zuleger mentioned that the gentlemen in attendance at the last meeting were opposed to the trail because they didn't want to open the neighborhood up to allowing more traffic in the area. Hartley asked about the ownership of the land. Weis confirmed that the city would need to acquire the land to cross there. Zuleger said staff recommends that commission take no action from liability and financial standpoint.

Commission takes no action at this time.

e. Park Sign Update (MacLeod)

MacLeod presented the commission with sample sign materials. The commission requested two additional bids from other companies.

Move to go forward with composite (extira-like) material for signage.

M/S/P: Ames/Hartley: Approved 4-0

f. Pebble Park Equipment (Bouthilet)

Bouthilet presented several themed ideas for playground equipment.

Weis asked about the age range of children near Pebble Park. It is currently an aging neighborhood, but is turning around, with younger families moving in. Weis asked if the age should be considered when designing a park. Bouthilet replied that Pebble Park is a destination park; people will drive to it to utilize facilities.

Ames said that he liked the look of the examples but concerned that it's for younger children. Ames stated that he would like to see more options for children of all ages.

The commission asked about cost. Bouthilet stated the cost of one option was approximately \$52,000. The prices of examples presented range between \$39k and \$52k.

Zeno asked what would be done with the old equipment if they decided not to use it. Staff discussed options including adding tough coat, which allows for the equipment to be painted. Hartley shared that she thought it would be wonderful if they could get more years out of the existing equipment, but improve them, and add additional features.

Bouthilet will bring more options to the April park meeting that will include more challenging equipment with pricing.

M/S/P: Ames/Weis: Approved 4-0

Staff Reports & Commission Updates

a. Communications Update (MacLeod)

The park commission will be the featured guest on the April edition of 'The Mayor Show,' which will be taped on March 18, 2014.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Alyssa MacLeod, Recording Secretary