

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday, July 21, 2014

Members Present: Hartley, Nelson, Ames, Weis, Zeno, Silvernale, Hietpas (6:34 pm)

Members Absent: Steele, Frick

Others Present: Planning Commissioner Larson, Taxpayer Relations & Communications Coordinator MacLeod, PWS Bouthilet, Park Maintainer Colemer, Councilmember Reeves, City Administrator Zuleger, Planning Intern Catherine Riley

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weis at 6:30 PM.

Approval of Agenda

Ames asked to add an item after VI.c - Sunfish Lake Park task force to discuss maintenance and entrance issues in park areas 2 & 3.

M/S/P: Hartley/Ames: Approved as amended 6-0

Approval of June 16, 2014 Minutes

Ames asked to change the word "toilet" to "toilets" on page three under item b.

M/S/P: Ames/Hartley: Approved as amended 6-0

Presentations

a. 2014 Trail Audit - Riley

Riley presented a trail audit packet that she has worked on. The plan discussed benefits of trails in a community, and emphasized the importance that the city trail system tie into regional trail systems. The audit was conducted on existing and future trails and detailed quality and material of the trails, rated on the PASER system.

Ames stated that he thought Riley did a great job, and felt it was a helpful update and provides insight that hadn't been addressed before. Ames asked if it would be appropriate to consider the trail system within the park reserve. Riley responded that there would likely be a lot of red tape to navigate around, but thought that it would be worth opening up that discussion. Ames referenced the existing trail system and felt that it was not an actual system, but more a series of groupings. He expressed that they need to be mindful going forward to make sure that they trails are connecting. Ames suggested that incoming developers are told up front about the philosophy to connect trails outside for each neighborhood.

Zuleger commented that the new 5th Street plan would include a connecting trail and felt that the key was to continue to work on the Lake Elmo Regional trail system.

Ames thought it might be worth approaching HOAs to see if they would like the City to take over maintenance of their private trails, as there is a high cost to maintain them. Riley responded that the planning department has approached HOAs about trail ownership and have received a mixed response, some negative. Zuleger stated that if the city were to take over maintenance on the trails, it is assumed that they would become public trails, and some HOAs are against that; would like to keep their trails private

Zeno added that he didn't think acquisition of HOA trails needed to be an all or nothing thing. That some of the HOA trails wouldn't necessarily contribute to the regional trail plan. Zeno also commented that if HOAs refused to make their trails public he advises that the City would build the trail system around those neighborhoods.

Zuleger asked the commission to refer to page 19 – the big picture and asked if any destinations were missing from the picture aside from the LERT. Ames discussed incorporating crossing the highways on the south and north ends of the City to open up connections to neighboring cities.

Hartley asked about the connection to a new elementary school that would potentially be built to accommodate future growth. Zuleger responded that the new school would likely be located in the 94 corridor and also mentioned that the 916 school would be located in the Eagle Point Business Center.

Weis asked how to proceed. Zuleger said that this is something that the commission could revisit for more discussion in the future. They talked about Olson Lake Trail improvements proposed to being in 2015.

Planning commission Larson made a suggestion in terms of working with developments with existing trail systems. He suggested that if there was a concerted effort by the city which put together a plan that sold benefits of access, including a specific route, it might go over better with the neighborhoods. He also mentioned the option to add signage. He believes that the trail acquisition effort needs to be led by the city.

Hietpas expressed that she hopes the City takes this seriously and acts on it, because she doesn't feel like any of the initially proposed trails on the original trail plan ever came into fruition.

Weis asked Riley if there are any existing trails in need of maintenance right now? Riley responded that the only one is at 50th street near Tana Ridge. Weis asked Bouthilet to gather some estimates to repair that trail. Bouthilet responded that the area that they were talking about specifically is actually a private HOA trail.

Reeves spoke that trail connectivity is key. Hietpas expressed that they need to look at future road improvements. Zeno asked if the city currently evaluates future roads for connectivity, right of way acquisition and costs, and other issues.

Weis asked to place further trail discussion on the August agenda.

Mayor Pearson asked if the commission would be looking at HOA trails to determine what might be a value to include in the overall trail system. Ames proposed that an agenda item for next month to be look at a trail map to determine which ones would be of value.

Weis asked how much the planning department was referencing the original trail plan. Zuleger mentioned that Riley is doing the audit because the existing plan is a bit antiquated.

A motion was made to talk further about the trail plan at the August meeting.

M/S/P: Ames/Zeno: Approved 7-0.

b. Sunfish & Reid entrance plans- Riley

Casey opened with a statement that the city is interested in improving the entrance of our parks. Riley presented concept plans for both Reid Park and Sunfish Lake Park.

Proposed improvements to Reid included fill at the entrance, sign placement closer to the street, an added stormwater pond to accommodate new development to the north, an aspen grove near the entrance of the trail entrance (to increase visibility), a garden area near the play set, and adding a berm and removing low brush to improve the maintenance/appearance of the front.

Ames commented that during the fall 2013 audit they talked about sight lines into the park, realigning the parking spaces, and that the ball diamond may need some work as well. Zuleger stated that the path in Reid has a lot of potential, and added that the city would be gaining land from both Chase and Gonyea developments to increase the size of Reid Park - the park has a lot of potential.

Hartley added that they had also discussed removing the dangerous basketball court, and suggested doing so at the same time the proposed improvements would be made.

Weis asked about cost projections. Riley replied that determining cost would be next step. Ames suggested that these improvements are addressed with a comprehensive plan that also includes amenity improvements.

Weis made a motion to request staff to put together pricing for the proposed improvements south of the drive. Zuleger mentioned that sign placement is crucial.

The Sunfish Lake Park plan included plantings at the entrance, adding boulevard trees along the drive to the parking area, paving the parking lot, better placed raingardens, a warming house/restroom, picnic area, and a natural-themed play area.

Ames expressed that the plan echoed some of the items discussed at the Sunfish Lake task force meeting recently held, and it is encouraging to see similar plans.

Motion made to direct staff to proceed with sign placement at both parks as recommended by Riley.

M/S/P: Ames/Hartley: approved 7-0

New Business

a. Parkland Funds Review (MacLeod)

MacLeod presented the commission with a Parkland Dedication Funds snapshot. The actual fund balance as of July 15, 2014 is \$1,052,108.21. The balance after approved payouts is \$852,947.61.

Zuleger told the commission that they would be receiving these statements each month, going forward. MacLeod asked if the commission would like to see any additions or changes to the report presentation. The commission felt the statement was appreciated and helpful.

Zuleger asked the commission to formally approve the report.

M/S/P: Ames/Hietpas: Move to approve Fund Reconciliation as presented. Approved 7-0

b. Inclusive Play – ADA (Weis)

Weis referred to an article that Reeves had shared with the commission, discussing inclusive play, a term more frequently used for ADA compliant play areas.

Zuleger talked about Madison's Place, the new inclusive play area coming into Bielenberg at Woodbury, and encouraged all of the commissioners to visit the Boundless playgrounds website. He also referenced another park in Stevens Point, WI. He stated that what makes boundless playgrounds unique is that there is wheelchair accessibility to the highest point on the structure. He added that boundless playgrounds cost between \$400k and \$600k fully installed. He stated that there are grant and fundraising opportunities available to support these types of projects.

Weis stated that he wanted to discuss inclusive playgrounds to consider for next year's CIP. Weis also expressed that many of the existing parks in Lake Elmo post accessibility challenges with the lack of hard surface up to the play structure. He feels that is something that the commission should address. Hartley reminded them that during the audit they had talked about addressing accessibility at DeMontreville. She thought since it is flat, it might be a good park to add some ADA features.

Reeves stated that he would like to commend the park commission for adding a paved trail to the Sanctuary play equipment that they approved at the last meeting. He advised that they continue to add features like this when the opportunities arise.

Nelson thinks that as they address the improvement of existing parks that they consider adding the hard paths to the parks for accessibility, but that it doesn't make sense to address immediately as a separate item.

c. Sunfish Lake task force mtg. Recap (Hietpas)

Hietpas stated that the plants have gone in along Jamaca. She added that the Sunfish Lake Park task force has met a few times and they have gone through areas 1 & 2. The next item on their agenda is to review area 3, and plan on making a presentation to the commission upon completion.

Weis expressed that he felt that while they were addressing their 2014 plan of work, the one park that seemed to have been overlooked is Sunfish. Zuleger reminded that they had put in the gate and would be adding the new sign as well.

d. Sunfish Lake Park Entrance (Ames)

Ames stated that while he was in Sunfish Lake Park he noticed two items that he would like to see addressed. The first he'd like to see is the lock removed from the second gate in Area 3. Colemer thought it was an MPCA lock. Ames responded that the area he's referring to goes to is not MPCA land – it is now parkland. Colemer said that he would take a look.

Ames also asked to have a path mowed in Area 2. He referenced an old schematic (2009) with mowed trails. He asked to have at least two paths created, a longer one and a shorter one, that loop for visitors to walk. Weis questioned putting mulch on the trails. Ames responded that he wasn't sure how that would fit with the burn schedule. Hietpas added that mulch would be difficult to maintain. Weis asked Colemer what he needs to get the paths mowed. Colemer asked for direction on the correct way to mow the paths. Ames stated that he will talk with Colemer regarding what is desired.

Ames also mentioned that Minnesota Native Landscapes had created a burn schedule for Sunfish Lake Park, and he wasn't sure if the city was correctly following that schedule. Ames made motion to direct city staff to contact Minnesota Native Landscapes to understand our burn schedule.

M/S/P: Ames/Hartley. Approved 7-0

Ames also mentioned adding verbiage to signs to ask people to clean up after themselves (in response to a note he found on the sign).

Weis asked Colemer if he had seen emails from Judith Blackford regarding clean up in the park. Colemer responded that he had and had been working on some of the concerns. Weis asked him to send an email outlining items addressed.

e. Sunfish Lake Park Clean Up (Zuleger)

Zuleger shared that Bouthilet and Commissioner Frick, under the direction of the mayor, met with Steven Kunde from the Society of American Foresters. Kunde put a forestry plan together to address storm damage, which Zuleger outlined, that would cost \$6,300. Once the plan is written and accepted, Kunde would possibly need to do additional work at the average cost of \$65/hour including travel time as needed.

Hietpas responded that Kathy Widen had put together a natural resource management plan several years ago that addressed many of the same items. She suggested that Kunde review the original/previous plan, which could be used as a jumping off point to avoid doubling up on work.

Hartley noted that residents living to the north of the park are concerned about fire hazards due to a large quantity of downed trees, and she feels it would be nice to get it harvested. Ames agrees but feels that they are dealing with two related-but-separate issues: forest tree inventory management, and harvesting. Zuleger responded that many of the trees do not pose a fuel threat.

Zuleger continued that the next step would be to look for council approval, but Hietpas had a good idea to pass on Widen's plan first to Kunde. Hietpas responded that she reviewed the plan and considers it very comprehensive. Zuleger said that he would figure out the interface and work out details with Bouthilet.

Hartley made motion to ask Steven Kunde to review Kathy Widen's plan and resubmit a bid to the city with a focus on invasive species and storm damage clean up.

M/S/P: Hartley/Hietpas: Passed 7-0

f. Priority Item: Pebble Park Master Plan Phase 2 (Weis)

MacLeod shared that residents at the Pebble Park neighborhood meeting on the 17th expressed that they would like to see Pickle ball added.

Weis looked at the remaining fund balance anticipated to spend for the year – approximately \$300,000 including equipment (approximately \$50,000 left). Weis reminded the commission that they were also looking at adding something in Tablyn this year, and suggested that the Pebble Phase 2 improvements be planned for spring 2015.

Hartley recalled that they had already discussed paving the parking lot and reducing the two entrances to one in 2014. If the basketball court were to be moved/made larger, it would be done at the same time.

Weis asked how the commission wanted to proceed and whether they put in one smaller item and something in Tablyn. Zuleger stated that staff could present a pickleball presentation before making a decision, and reminded them that they can always go to community surveys to try out new ideas and gain community input. Weis suggested that the commission compile a laundry list of items to survey residents.

Zuleger reminded them that their initial budget did not include the contributions of many newer developments, and that the fund would continue to be replenished by at least seven other developments on the table. He added that there is an expectation that they will be using the funds within a short period of time after funds are received.

Ames stated that it wasn't budget that would restrict their timeline, but rather construction season that dictates what they can achieve in 2014. Zuleger added that Bouthilet has requested that installation by the manufacturer be included on any additional improvements, due to staff limitations.

Hartley stated that she thought they would be presented with a plan at this meeting showing where the courts would fit. Zeno stated that he doesn't want to see the volleyball courts delayed any longer. Zuleger asked if they would consider allowing staff to decide where the courts would go. Hietpas asked if Intern Riley could take a look at it for aesthetics.

Weis recalled that at this meeting they would be discussing what the plan would include – to Steele's comments about not having plan. Zuleger reiterated that what was discussed for Phase 2 included volleyball courts, expansion of the basketball court (or pickleball), paving, and bathrooms. Weis said that he would like to put out a survey to see what amenities are desired before moving forward.

Ames stated that it would be beneficial to have a site plan to see how the phases will fit together. MacLeod projected the Phase 1 improvements and outlined where phase 2 items were proposed to go.

Zuleger stated that Colemer has been taking ownership of parks, and have heard from the community that he's been making a difference. Commission agreed to award Colemer with a quality star award at the next meeting.

Weis confirmed that Phase 2 would be discussed at a later date for consideration for 2015, but they would be moving forward with the volleyball court. He proposed asking for pricing to be presented at the August meeting.

Reeves suggested that the commission gather all of their information, and coordinate their meeting schedule with the council schedule to move forward with approval. Hietpas made a suggestion that the commission approve the courts with a not-to-exceed amount, and direct City staff to gather hard costs to bring to council and to essentially bypass the park commission for this decision.

Hietpas made motion to approve staff researches costs of a volleyball court and that they approve the purchase of a double court not to exceed \$30,000, and present to council for approval.

Ames stated that he was not comfortable voting on this without having tangible information in front of him. Hietpas stated that with a volleyball court they can pretty much know what to expect, unlike a playground equipment purchase. Ames agreed.

Zuleger voiced that he just visited the National Park and Rec site, and said that the cost for a single volleyball court runs between \$6,000-\$10,000.

Hietpas amended her motion reducing not to exceed amount to \$20,000.

M/S/P: Hietpas/Zeno. Passed 7-0.

Old Business

a. Sanctuary & Pebble Phase 1 Update (MacLeod)

MacLeod informed the commission that equipment for Sanctuary and Pebble Phase 1 has been ordered and is expected to be installed by the end of August.

b. Update on 39th Street Trails (MacLeod)

MacLeod said she had talked with city engineer Griffin for an update on this project. Griffin had informed her that project bids came in higher than expected, but the bituminous trail portion was bid at \$60,000, less than the anticipated \$68,000. MacLeod confirmed that the trail would be paid for by parkland dedication funds.

Zuleger added that city staff met that morning with the property owners, who are eager to move forward with the project, despite a higher cost. The project has been approved to move forward and will be started in fall 2014.

Weis asked if it is standard city procedure that matters such as this (trail additions in conjunction with street improvements) doesn't go through park commission for approval.

Zuleger stated that this was a street section that was designed as a parkway, considered to be a minor collector road in the city. Council made a decision to participate in the project and add a trail.

Reeves shared apology that, as the council liaison to the park commission, it was his responsibility to share the council's decision with the park commission, and he feels he may have dropped the ball.

Weis commented that if newly proposed trails are not included on the City's trail plan, it would be appreciated if the council would consult the park commission for input and approval.

c. Dog Park Update (MacLeod)

At their May meeting the Park Commission decided to table the discussion of a dog park until they had more information. In response to this request, MacLeod told the commission that she had met with a representative from the Friends of Stillwater Area Dog Park, and acquired some more details regarding concerns, benefits, needs, costs, and local support. The commission felt that the information was helpful, and decided to turn the discussion over to the Sunfish Lake task force.

Staff Report

a. Park Sign Update (MacLeod)

MacLeod shared that two signs were finished (Reid and Pebble) and picked up earlier that day. The rest of the signs are anticipated to be completed by the first week of August, with Sunfish Lake Park being the next in line for completion. An amenity panel for one of the signs was in the council chambers for the commission to view.

b. LERT Update (Weis)

Weis stated that city planner Johnson has continued to talk to Washington County and that they are working on the west side access plan. Zuleger added that the LERT is currently on hold but the city has been talking with the county about being incorporated into the master plan to be considered by the Met Council. Zuleger added that Met Council Park and Open Space Chair, former Mayor Johnston, recently dropped off a copy of the master plan, which has been serving as a guide for next steps.

Hietpas referenced the search corridor and stated that the LERT was not currently part of that plan. She commented that regionally, there are a lot of trails going on in other areas, but hardly anything in Washington County and she would like to see more priority placed on Lake Elmo trails at a county level. Weis commented on other communities coming forward and that trail plan requests are becoming more prevalent in the county.

Ames asked what the next steps are. Zuleger responded that the city has been requesting that the search corridor be included as a key corridor in the county's trail plan between Oakdale and Stillwater, connecting to a regional park. The City is continuing to have conversations with the county about the best way to access the Lake Elmo Park Reserve. Weis has offered to present the LERT presentation to the County to keep the ball rolling. He emphasized that it is important to get included in the plan because it will open up a lot of funding opportunities.

c. Hammes Park Space (Zuleger)

Zuleger stated that there was an item not on the agenda that needed to be addressed: The Hammes subdivision park space. To recap, Zuleger shared that per previous discussion and in response to the commission's request, the Hammes developers had placed the park in the northwest corner of the development near Keats Avenue and Goose Lake. The proposed park space includes a fishing pier, shelter, grill, parking lot and is also where the lift station is located. Currently the plan does not include a play structure, which was initially requested by the park commission as a condition of approval. The Hammes developers are seeking input from the commission as to what type of play structure to include, and if they could receive credit for parkland dedication if the structure was included. Zuleger continued to point out additional green/meeting spaces within the development and the 100' buffer perimeter per the comp plan (including a trail).

Ames thought he remembered a small park internally in the neighborhood that would have a play structure. He is not sure that a play structure near a 55 mph roadway is a good place for a play structure. Ames also questioned where neighborhood children would play, as lot sizes looked small to consider private play sets.

Zuleger pointed out that the Lake Elmo Park Reserve was located a mile north of the development, with a phenomenal play set. Ames stated that he didn't feel current playgrounds were within reasonable walking distance for residents. Hietpas shared that she didn't feel that the green spaces included throughout the development were large enough for community meeting spaces.

Zuleger pointed out the location of neighboring parks in Stonegate and Lennar neighborhoods.

The commission requested that a location central in the neighborhood be considered for play structure placement. Zuleger said that he would forward their comments to the developers.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Alyssa MacLeod, Recording Secretary