

# MINUTES

## City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday, August 18, 2014

**Members Present:** Hartley, Nelson, Ames, Weis, Zeno, Silvernale, Hietpas, Steele, Frick

**Members Absent:**

**Others Present:** Planning Commissioner Larson, Taxpayer Relations & Communications Coordinator MacLeod, PWS Bouthilet, Park Maintainer Colemer, City Administrator Zuleger, Mayor Pearson

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weis at 6:33 PM.

### Approval of Agenda

Weis asked to add item D under new business for baseball backstops.

**M/S/P: Ames/Frick: Approved as amended 7-0**

### Approval of July 21, 2014 Minutes

**M/S/P: Frick/Ames: Approved 7-0**

### Presentations

#### **a. Quality Star – Jamie Colemer**

Park commission recognized Jamie Colemer with a Quality Star Award. Zuleger added that the award would make Colemer eligible for Employee of the Year.

### New Business

#### **a. HOA Trail Discussion (Weis)**

Weis stated that the trail discussion was a follow up from last month's meeting – to discuss what HOA owned trails may fit into the City's overall trail plan.

Zuleger pointed out on the map currently planned trails. He clarified that the area the city is lacking connectivity is north of Highway 5. Connectivity in the southern part of the city would improve with planned striping on 10<sup>th</sup>, path on 5<sup>th</sup>, and some of the regional trails in those areas. They would like to put a ped or bike path on Lake Elmo Ave., but the right of way is too restrictive. Ames added that another weak point in connectivity is crossing Highway 5. Zuleger responded that a box culvert has been discussed as a means to cross.

The west side trail plan, according to the County's old master plan is routed for: north up Keats, east on 10<sup>th</sup>, north on LE Ave, and Highway 5 to the High School. The plan does not offer a lot of connections to neighborhoods or parks, which is one reason why the City would like to try to get the LERT plan considered for the new master plan.

Weis asked if they should re-route the LERT plan based on the existing HOA trails. Zuleger stated that going back to the survey residents desire connectivity between neighborhoods and to the parks. Zuleger showed the routes which may be best to connect to the desired destinations. Ames and Frick expressed favor for the 47<sup>th</sup> street/50<sup>th</sup> Street route to connect to the high school, and the Gateway trail. Ames pointed out that there is also a fairly large shoulder on that road already.

Weis stated that the County will be meeting within the next month to select which trails to include in their new master plan. Several cities will be vying for trails to be included in the plan.

Weis proposed that a subcommittee be formed to reevaluate the existing trail plan. He thought it would be helpful in order to evaluate upcoming developments. Ames shared that he would be happy to be on that subcommittee but asks that any HOA needs be brought to attention early in the process. Weis stated that next steps would be to finalize and approve the trail plan, and then share it with the planning commission and council.

Zeno, Ames and Weis were appointed as members of the trail subcommittee.

Zuleger said that the subcommittee would have to address HOA trails – as the original plan was that HOA trails would be deeded back to the city, but that hasn't been the case with many of them.

#### **b. Future of Lions and VFW Park (Pearson)**

Pearson stated that the village plan was looked at by the council and old village group. The consensus was that the Lions Park and VFW ball fields would stay, and the thought was to capitalize on the baseball – perhaps develop a vintage baseball feel in the area. He asked the commission to consider the idea and improvements to the downtown parks a priority. He suggested that a subcommittee could be formed to tackle the issue, and recommended including a representative from Lake Elmo Baseball and Mr. Thompson from the EDA.

Hartley stated that the commission looked at Lions and VFW, and recalls that further planning was on hold until the drainage issues were worked out. Zuleger responded that the new drainage plans solve the problem in the village. He stated that there were some people that were interested in moving the fields to create a village green, but after talking to members of the baseball community there is a sentiment that they do not want to lose those fields. He feels that the drainage issue is a moot point now.

Weis asked how the fields fit into the overall village green plan. Pearson responded that he doesn't think anyone has a really good handle on what it will look like, but he doesn't think that they should wait on the final plan to consider improvements.

Ames stated that the fields were something that they've talked about for the past ten years. He says that he's heard a lot of different ideas for the village area, but is reluctant to invest the money without knowing exactly what the plan is.

Hietpas asked if there would be room or opportunity to expand the property and include other features to attract more members of the community. Pearson responded that the city owns properties in the area which could potentially be considered for future expansion, but economically it might not be in the cards at this time. Zuleger reiterated that they own the park building, the fire department, and the library lot; a stretch of land that will all be city-owned, so there is an opportunity to expand. He also knows that when they surveyed businesses, they asked for the city to keep the green as close to the businesses as possible.

Steele expressed concern that they are losing the notion of a village green. He does not think of a village green as a baseball field but open to a lot more other purposes as well. Pearson stated that he feels it is a matter of opinions.

Frick agreed that it seemed the council has cooled off on the idea of a village green. Pearson responded that they had cooled off to an idea of a village green located further out. Frick asked why there is no plan to put in a green. Pearson responded that with all of the other projects and infrastructure it's not in the budget.

Dean said that envisioned location for the green would be cutting through by the Hagstrom property as a gateway to the village green. He added that the reason why the green has taken a back seat is because of the roadwork, drainage plan, sewer etc.

Ames asked if they could deed part of it as parkland. Zuleger replied yes.

Weis suggested that this item is added this to the retreat agenda, and that the commission fit it in as a priority item for 2015. Weis suggested that they include someone from Lake Elmo Baseball and someone representing the village green plans in attendance as well.

### **c. Tablyn Park Plan Discussion (Weis)**

Weis summarized by saying that a survey was put out requesting feedback from residents regarding what they would like to see in Pebble Park, and recognized several Tablyn residents in attendance at the meeting. He continued to say that Tablyn Park was one of their goals for 2014, and he would like to see something be done in the park yet this year. MacLeod provided a recap on survey results. The meeting was opened for public comments.

#### **Public Comments:**

*Mark Busta, 8810 27<sup>th</sup> St. Ct. N. – Tablyn Park abuts his property. He saw an immediate need to do cleanup. He also mentioned the path from the cul-de-sac is at least 35 years old, never been touched, and is in bad shape/dangerous. As far as the use of the park, it is an underused park (probably overused by people that shouldn't be using it). He said that he's talked to the sheriff's department, and wouldn't hurt if the city asked them to make a couple more sweeps after closing. The ball park has been a problem since it was built. Not useable for anything but t-ball – no organized baseball that happens there – it's too small for little league. He said it's used more in the fall for football practice. There has been a problem with people running their dogs down there off-leash, when children are playing. He said that the tennis courts are used a fair amount.*

*Bryant Peterson, 8800 27<sup>th</sup> St. Ct. N. – Agrees with what Mark has said. He said that there are young families moving in that have concerns about bringing their kids down due to poor activities during the day. Reiterated that the ball field is not fit for use; added that the outfield is horribly bumpy. He said that the use is mixed between surrounding residents and residents from outside of town. He added that if they wanted to attract people to play they would need to make quite a few improvements to the fields. He commented on the trails that were included on the draft plan.*

Steele asked the folks who spoke what kind of uses they have observed. Residents responded that they use the lower playground, picnicking, sledding, and that the path is used. One mentioned tennis was increasing. One resident said that she has never seen the parking lot full. She wasn't sure why they would move it. Steele responded that this park is used heavily for sledding, and the idea is to make this a destination park for sledding so parking would need to be improved in that case.

Weis asked Bouthilet to comment on baseball use. Bouthilet responded that the field is choppy because of the field being used for football. He added that a primary problem with the ball field is the alignment, and there are already plans to adjust and move the backstop. He is working on pricing.

Weis asked the commission to decide on 3 or 4 items to price out for the September meeting.

Steele chimed in that once usage is increased in parks, poor usage tends to diminish. Ames added that one thing they talked about during the audit was the site lines into the park from Stillwater Boulevard. Ames added that they need to decide if they want to invest in the ball field. Bouthilet asked the commission to define what kind of ball field they are looking for.

Hartley shared that during the audit they talked about adding parking and taking out the basketball court. Residents suggested moving the swings down to the playground. Weis had noticed a person with mobility issues trying to get to the park area. Weis suggested moving the playground to the top of the hill near the swings, or adding a paved trail to the current location of the play set. A resident commented that a parking lot next to children's swings is not the best location. Hietpas mentioned that if they move it up, they're going to have all the activity on the top of the hill, and that the swings definitely need to be moved down by the play structure.

Steele expressed that he is intrigued with the idea of moving the parking lot lower and perhaps adding a gate to close at dark to decrease misuse. Steele added that the warming house should be put right next to the parking lot. Weis added that the commission should back off on the restroom during this phase, due to the possibility of including it in the LERT plans. Hietpas said they should at least decide on a placeholder space for planning purposes. Ames suggested moving the bathroom closer to the trail.

Hartley suggested raising the tree canopy on Stillwater Blvd. Steele suggested removing the ball field completely and turning it into a Frisbee golf park. Zuleger responded that Reid Park sets up better for a disc golf park. Zeno suggested adding a skating rink – capitalizing on the winter park idea. Weis added that they would need to include lighting. Frick asked if there would be enough room for the skating rink in addition to the sledding hill. Bouthilet added that if they removed the ball field and graded for soccer, they could use that area for a rink.

Ames said that he would like to go back and look at the ball field before deciding to get rid of the field, as all discussions in the past have been focused on improving the field.

Weis asked for thoughts on a gazebo/shelter. Steele responded that he thought there was a lot of shade in the picnicking area and didn't think a shelter was needed. He suggested expanding and building out the picnic area. Weis responded that with the recent clearing of trees, shade was actually minimal in the area, and Hietpas suggested adding a few trees by the picnic area.

Hartley added that the stairs and railing needs to be replaced.

Weis suggested addressing safety issues first which would include stairs, raising the tree coverage, parking, and trail clean up. Bouthilet suggested taking out the stairs, and adding a switchback trail (ADA accessible) instead.

Weis asked to clarify where the new parking lot would be. Ames said just to the east of the gate, and the warming house just to east of that. Talked about starting with a gravel parking lot at first. The gate would go right at the entrance near the new sign/Stillwater Blvd. Steele said he would like to know how much it would cost to redo the upper parking and add lower parking

#### Pricing Priorities

1. Remove stairs/Install ADA path to play set, and open up canopy to widen picnic area. Move swing set down the play set
2. Gravel parking down below (feasibility study including bathroom)
3. hockey/ice skating prep
4. Electric gate
5. Clearing trail on east border
6. Adding trees by playground

Bouthilet said that many of the items were too expensive and time intensive to be able to get them completed in fall, unless they contracted out. Steele asked which items were feasible. Weis stated that he would like prices and then the commission can determine what to invest in – they could contract some work out if needed.

Hietpas made a motion made to abandon the softball field and prep for soccer field. Frick seconded the motion. Ames said that he would like to visit the site again before making a decision. Hietpas withdrew her motion.

Hartley moved to ask staff to obtain pricing for the priorities outlined for Tablyn. Weis amended the motion to include asking Casey to revise the site plan.

**M/S/P: Hartley/Hietpas. 6-0, Weis Abstain.**

#### **d. Backstop Improvements**

Bouthilet stated that Tablyn is off the table per the previous agenda item, but Pebble was still slotted for improvements this year. Lake Elmo Baseball is also requesting that all items including the backstop, fencing, and batting cages be replaced at VFW. They would consider a cost share. Costs would be \$4,278 for backstop improvements at VFW, and \$2,990 for Pebble.

Weis reiterated that the VFW park improvements would be a safe investment.

Bouthilet asked for a not to exceed price (for Pebble and VFW) in order to bring to council at their next meeting. Weis asked about the price share. Bouthilet suggested approaching the price share on more substantial improvements in the future.

Pearson mentioned that Reid could use improvements as well, and that addressing more parks at once could result in some cost savings. Bouthilet responded that Reid and DeMontreville were next on the list to be repaired.

Weis made motion to approve a not to exceed price of \$7,500 for backstops in VFW and Pebble. Motion amended to include not-to-exceed \$12,500 to repair backstops at four parks (Pebble, VFW, Reid, and DeMontreville).

**M/S/P: Weis/Ames: Approved: 7-0**

#### **Old Business**

##### **a. Pebble Park Volleyball Court (MacLeod)**

The Pebble Park volleyball courts were brought to council on August 5, 2014 with a not-to-exceed price of \$20,000. The council requested more information before approving the expenditure. They were concerned that the park commission did not thoroughly assess all location options available to determine best placement. They also requested more details on usage, and the need for a double vs. single court. MacLeod asked the commission to address their concerns, and stated that the item would go back to council on the first meeting in September.

Ames responded by stating that they explored expanding volleyball in the Lions Park and they do not have the ability to expand downtown because of drainage issues. Ames added that he thinks Pebble Park the best location that they currently have.

Zeno asked if the parking lot located to the east of the existing volleyball court was city property. Zuleger responded that it is not, and shared that he is surprised how much the tennis and volleyball courts are used. Zeno commented that they at least twice per week during summer. Zeno also shared that according to an interview from the USAV the grassroots is growing very quickly in volleyball; by next year it will be an NCAA sanctioned sports, and it is a popular Olympic sport. There are a tremendous number of females in the school district that play indoors and would play outside if they had a location to do so (there are only three sand volleyball courts located between Lake Elmo and Lake Phalen in St. Paul). Zuleger added that training in sand in summer helps with jumping.

Frick asked if Reid Park would be an acceptable location for the court. Zeno had looked at an aerial of the current park space, and determined that the court would not fit with the active ball field.

Zeno expressed that he would personally prefer have two courts downtown, but unless there is a way they could put it over the drainfield, it isn't going to happen.

Colemer asked if DeMontreville has ever been considered. Hartley responded that she recalls as part of the auditing process, they decided that Pebble would work best.

Regarding a double vs. single court, Zeno said that there is an economy of scale in building them, and two courts work better for teams. Two courts will draw more people than one will, but it also give players confidence that there will be space for them to play.

Pearson responded that he feels the commission had addressed all of the concerns.

MacLeod will write a summary memo and include minutes to council.

#### **b. Forestry Plan Update (Bouthilet)**

MacLeod summarized that the commission last left the forestry plan to send Kathy Wieden's plan to Steven Kunde. Kunde responded that the previous plan focused a lot on invasive species. He recommended short term to work on clean-up, and long term devise a comprehensive forestry plan.

Bouthilet was leaning toward having Kunde come in and mark an area to harvest. It was Frick's assumption that Kunde would direct the commission to an individual to come in and do the work. Bouthilet added that someone still has to come in and mark and that is Kunde's purview.

Hartley asked if they need to meet with the bioharvest company to find out costs.

Weis asked if they would have time to look into this more. Bouthilet said that the harvesting/clean-up would likely be completed in winter with limited impact to cross country skiing.

Weis advised tabling the issue until September.

#### **c. Sunfish & Reid Park Entrance Plans (MacLeod)**

The commission had asked for pricing on items included in Reid and Sunfish entrance park plans that Planning Intern Riley had presented at the July meeting. MacLeod stated that estimated cost for the plantings at the front of Sunfish Lake Park would be between \$500-\$800. Riley requested more direction on the remainder of the plan, as cost could vary significantly depending on type and quantity of plants.

Hietpas suggested having Riley create a plan that the commission could work off of over the next few years, in phases. She added she was hesitant to put a restriction on what type of plants to include.

Weis asked if it would be worth having Casey draw up plans for a handful of parks to review at the retreat and write into the 2015 plan.

Ames stated that it seemed that they were mostly concerned with the front entrance to Sunfish at this time, and suggested that they break the Sunfish plan into two parts to start with.

#### **d. Sunfish Lake Park Burn Schedule (Bouthilet)**

Colemer informed the commission that Sunfish Lake Park is on a 3-4 year burn schedule that occurs in spring. Native Landscapes had just finished the last spot spray and the next scheduled burn will be spring 2015.

Frick mentioned that the Kathy Wieden plan included the Native Landscapes management plan and 2012 and 2014 were listed as scheduled burns.

Hartley said that on prairies it all depends on what the management company finds out when they look at it. The burn is mostly to control the dead material buildup so that the native plants can get more sun and grow more readily.

Ames asked Colemer about the mowing. Colemer responded that the center lane has been mowed.

### **Staff Report**

**a. Park Sign & Equipment Update (MacLeod)**

Signs: The first new park sign was installed earlier that afternoon in Sunfish Lake Park.

Pebble Park: the space for both the Zipkrooz and the climbing structure has been prepped. Zipkrooz structure has already been delivered; the rock climbers were expected within the next two weeks.

Sanctuary Park: Site has been mowed, and utilities had been located. Park staff would prep site, and equipment is expected to be delivered by the end of next week.

**b. Prep for September Meeting Priority Item (Weis)**

Weis asked what the commission would like to work on in September. Ames suggested that they continue discussion on Tablyn. Commission agreed.

Weis also asked for an updated budget /snapshot on what has been spent so far this year for presentation at the September meeting.

**c. LERT Update (Weis)**

Nick and Jack have been in conversation with the county. Weis read an email update from Johnson to the commission. It stated that the county was planning on building the trail from Stillwater Blvd to the west side access to the Park Reserve. Weis said that to his opinion Lake Elmo and Oakdale should be fighting it, in order to get a more substantial trail system considered that includes the east side of the LERT.

Hietpas stated that she has some ideas how to approach the issue and former Mayor Johnston would be interested in getting involved as well.

Weis said that his frustration is that they were never invited to present the proposed trail so that the county does not have any background, which increases the chance that Lake Elmo will not be selected.

Hietpas asked to have a meeting scheduled as soon as possible with former Mayor Johnston, Dean Zuleger and Nick Johnson, and Jennifer Pelletier.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:31 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Alyssa MacLeod, Recording Secretary