

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday, November 17, 2014

Members Present: Hartley, Weis, Silvernale, Frick, Ames, Nelson, Steele, Hietpas, Zeno (8:39 pm)

Members Absent:

Others Present: Taxpayer Relations & Communications Coordinator MacLeod, Planning Commissioner Rolf Larson, Park Maintainer Colemer, City Administrator Zuleger, Councilmember Reeves

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

Approval of Agenda

Hartley added to establish meeting dates for January and February.

Zuleger added an update on the Carriage Station deed transfer to the city

Weis moved MPCA update to beginning of New business

Hietpas moved Sunfish Lake planting to beginning of new business

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

Approval of October 20, 2014 Minutes

M/S/P: Frick/Hartley: Approved 7-0

Presentations

a. Easton Village Park Plan

Dan Lanes from GameTime presented a concept for the parkland in the Easton Village development (breaking ground in spring 2015). The plan includes a small tot area, a play structure for older kids, and an adult fitness area. Net cost of proposed plan is \$280,000.

Weis stated that he personally likes the plan, he thinks that the first thing that the commission needs to do is to decide on a budget. Hartley asked if they would be getting any funds. This is one of the developments where there is a full land dedication, so no additional funds are likely.

Weis asked the developers when they would like to know the budget. Tom responded that they would like in time to include in their developers review which would be mid to late January. Weis asked how much is reasonable for a park like this. Zuleger and Game Time rep responded around \$100k.

Weis suggested discussing again at the December meeting.

b. Homestead Park

Stephen Mastey of Landscape Architecture addressed the commission on behalf of the Homestead HOA. Mastey was working with the HOA to develop a plan for their parkland which has not been developed. The proposed plan is to develop a natural passive park with a trail system and six different plant types on roughly 11 acres of parkland (2.7 acres of which are owned by the city; the remainder owned by the HOA). The Master plan has been presented and approved to the MN Land Trust. The whole plan would cost around \$300,000. The homeowners have contributed funds to develop the parkland but they currently do not have enough to complete the plan. Ideally they would like to install in the spring.

Frick asked what instigated the HOA to work on this now. Mastey replied that this was one of the first open space developments and they were waiting to understand demographics before developing the park. Frick responded that she lives in Heritage Farms and it is a similar situation where they have a lot of open space but nothing has been done and wonders what jump started this conversation.

Hietpas asked if they were to develop the park, would the HOA be prepared to have that whole area opened up to the public.

Ames expressed that there are currently many other open space developments that are also waiting for park land development. The residents have been stewards of the land. He doesn't feel that it is the commission's purview to go back and retroactively add trails.

The commission is concerned about putting out funds to develop private land.

Frick suggested that they review this in terms of needs of the entire city. Hietpas expressed that timeline of development should not be a factor as there are many other developments waiting for their parks to be developed as well. Steele said that if the HOA was asking the commission to be a partner in this, they would need to know how much funding the neighborhood is requesting, and what amount would be contributed by the HOA. Mastey replied that that is yet to be determined, as they HOA needs to vote on it, and they are also looking into different grant opportunities.

Ames said that he is only comfortable making improvements to city-owned parkland only; not the privately owned land. Steele added that the only way they would be able to invest the money is if they added a sign at the entrance of the park.

Zuleger stated that realistically the development is close to a mobile home park whose residents will likely use the park, and the Homestead neighborhood should consider that in their planning. Ames feels that they don't have anything to respond to with this plan as it is designed to benefit residents in the neighborhood

c. Sunfish Lake Forestry Plan

Steven Kunde, contract forester, asked for some input on goals from the commission. Buckthorn, blowdown, and aging timber were issues that he had identified in the park

Wendy Griffin from the Washington Conservation District addressed the commission and spoke about buckthorn.

Hietpas asked for Griffin and Kunde's opinion on the blow down. Kunde responded that if the blowdown isn't extensive, it isn't necessary to remove it. He continued that some of the areas on the eastern side there is a fairly large opening where there's extensive blowdown, which could result in increased buckthorn growth. He wanted more information from the commission regarding their future thoughts for the park in order to better determine an action plan. He referenced work in the Three Rivers Park District. Kunde added that he talked to the land trust, they could create an interim plan to address the blow down.

Steele asked generally how healthy the forest was. Kunde responded that it is currently healthy, but will decline within the next 20 years or so. More storm events will only create more buckthorn.

Weis asked Kunde to bring a plan that gives the commission prioritized recommendations on what they should do. Kunde replied that he could bring in some options regarding the Aspen area. Hietpas requested that he also include areas of the forest where he believes tree removal is necessary.

New Business

a. Sunfish Lake Park Planting

Wendy Griffin gave recommendations for planting in Sunfish Lake Park Area 3. She added that she thinks they can get the trees at a reasonable price for the city. Cost would be roughly \$10 for 15 trees + tax.

Motion made to spend \$500 to purchase seedlings from the Washington Conservation District Tree Sale.

M/S/P: Hietpas/Weis: Approved 7-0

a. MPCA Update

Zuleger found in his research that there are no funds available to replace land taken over by MPCA. He spoke with a DNR commissioner, who said they would consider waiving the grant requirement to add land for the land that was lost in the landfill. The MPCA would be willing to help the City find funds/grants if the requirement still stood, but not offer cash replacement.

In 2009 the city started to lose connectivity to the issue. Now after revisiting the issue, a master file has been created. The city's first goal is to find cash equivalent or land that could be provided. If that is not an option, the second goal is to get out of the DNR penalty for replacing the land. Zuleger feels that it was presumptive of the staff person who stated that there might be funds provided to replace park land.

The bottom line is that this is an interagency issue and they need to get the MPCA and DNR to reach agreement. DNR gave the grant, and asked for land or funds back for the land that was taken by the MPCA.

b. Carriage Station Park Deed Update

The City is currently doing a deed title search. Once documentation is acquired, the city attorney will prepare a quick claim deed. If there is pushback the commission will have to decide what they would like to charge the HOA for the equipment put in place there. The City well house is also on the land deeded to the HOA.

Zuleger also added that the Tapestry neighborhood is posting 'no trespassing' signs again. There have been conversations with the city about taking over those paths.

c. Light Up Lake Elmo Sponsorship

Weis asked the commission if they would like to sponsor a tree for the Light Up Lake Elmo event.

Motion made for the Park Commission to sponsor a Light Up Lake Elmo tree for \$30.

M/S/P: Hartley/Frick: 7-0 approved.

d. Comprehensive Park Plan

Riley feels that the existing plan was fairly well executed, but it could use some updating. Weis suggested that the commission follow a five step plan to update the document. 1. Update inventory to reflect our current parks. 2. Decide if the Parks Commission would like to add or subtract sections of the document, or if the current layout of the document is adequate. 3. Update each section of the document to reflect the 2040 population goal and demographics. 4. Add park goals and how to achieve them for each park. Include the park plans we have created so far and additional plans. 5. Part 5-1: Implementation should be longer and more in-depth, and could even include a proposed schedule of how to reach our goals. Add grants we can apply for, which park they will go to, and their deadlines.

Riley will work with Bouthilet and Colemer to acquire information on park equipment installation dates, and will provide an updated inventory to the commission in December.

Frick asked how they will handle the new parks. Casey responded that the inventory is on existing parks, and they would set goals for 1 year, 5 year, etc., and would update the inventory again at those times.

Steele commented that it would be helpful if plans for new parks/developments were presented sooner to allow more time to review and comment. Hietpas added that it would allow them time to review with the

comprehensive plan in mind. Weis added that they hope the comprehensive park plan will be given to developers/planners for future development.

Steele asked for a list of park recommendations/needs based on population to accompany the updated inventory.

e. Pollinator grant

MacLeod asked the commission to allow Mr. Mastey to speak about the bee safe cities ordinance and pollinator grant as it was included on the agenda with his presentation but wasn't discussed.

Mastey thought the park commission may be interested in championing an initiative to implement a bee friendly ordinance within the city. By doing so the city would be publicly recognizing that they value the importance of pollinators, and the city would adopt policies and procedures that support that.

Steele asked if there are costs involved. Mastey replied that it is more about raising awareness, and it's a positive thing from a PR standpoint. He suggested having Riley do some more research on this. Riley commented that Shorewood is the first and only MN city thus far to adopt a bee friendly resolution.

Hietpas moved to make Lake Elmo the second city to become a bee safe city. No second.

In order to go forward, they would need to gather information and present to Council. Mastey suggested checking with public works to make sure that internal policies do not currently conflict with the resolution.

Motion made to have staff gather further information on the pollinator bee policy and whether we should proceed to present to council.

M/S/P: Frick/Weis: 7-0 approved.

Old Business

a. Sunfish Lake Task Force Plan

Steele gave an overview of the proposed plan. He suggested that the commission discuss the plan briefly tonight and discuss in detail in December, revisit and approve in January, and then present to council. Frick agrees that she would like the commission to review.

Frick added that it was a collaborative process between task force members. She expressed that she would like the rest of the commission to review and weigh in with their thoughts.

Hietpas feels that in area 3 she would still like to be open to allowing people to have a space to bring their dogs off leash. Currently this was not in the plan. She feels that the rest of the commissioners should read the plan and add their own ideas.

The commission will discuss again in December.

Staff Report

a. Koch Pipeline

MacLeod presented an update per the City Engineers. Koch Pipeline acquired a 66' easement and will be working in the DeMontreville Wildlife Park area. Funds would be provided in exchange for trees removed, most likely in ROW funds. Engineering staff wanted to keep them in the loop as work was taking place on parkland.

Motion: Lake Elmo park commission expressed sentiment as easement is explored to preserve trees in that area.

M/S/P: Ames/Hietpas. 7-0 approved.

b. December Meeting/ Christmas Party

pizza at next meeting for Christmas party.

c. Dates for January/February 2015 Meetings

Regular meeting dates for January and February fall on holidays. Hartley asked to discuss dates at December meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Alyssa MacLeod, Recording Secretary