

**FINAL
Lake Elmo Park Commission
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
December 21, 2009**

Chairman Ames called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Zeno, Booher, Ames, Blackford, Dunn, Larson, Dobbs, Steele,

STAFF PRESENT: Project Assistant Kriegler

Agenda

Agenda was approved (Booher / Larson, 7-0)

Minutes

November 16, 2009 minutes approved as amended (Dunn / Larson, 6-0 with Steele abstaining)

Sunfish Lake Park Area 2 concept plan: add the motion to accept the Sunfish Lake Park Area 2 concept plan with identified changes – and that the motion was approved 7-0 (M/S Larson/Booher)

City Trail Guide Plan and Review of Stonegate Trail: Add John Booher's last name to the list of viewpoints that he expressed.

Information Items

Sunfish Lake Prairie Restoration RFP – Kriegler reported that proposals are due January 12 and that while the proposals will be submitted in written form, the Commission can include an oral presentation / interview as a part of the evaluation process.

2010 Park Commission Meeting Schedule

A 2010 meeting schedule was proposed that included all but two meetings scheduled for the traditional 3rd meeting of each month. January and February meetings are scheduled for the Wednesday following the traditional Monday due to national holidays (Martin Luther King and Presidents days).

MOTION: Approval of 2010 meeting schedule (Approved 6-1, M/S Dunn/Booher)

Discussion on Sunfish Lake Park ski trail grooming policy

The City has a long standing contract with Washington County for services related to grooming the ski trails at Sunfish Lake Park. While the annual contract includes a schedule for hourly labor and equipment rental rates, it does not include other details such as an estimate of time associated with a typical grooming event, or any mention of any authorization, schedule or conditions that would trigger a grooming event.

The City also has a history as a DNR Grant-In-Aid Ski Trail. Trail administration, development, and maintenance costs are divided with the GIA program paying 65 percent of these costs and the local club or sponsor providing the remaining 35 percent. Winter trail grooming costs are divided with the GIA program paying 90 and the local sponsor paying 10 percent. While the City was not an active participant in the program the past few years, they have been awarded a GIA maintenance grant of \$4,064 and a capital improvement grant of \$2,000 for an information kiosk for the year of 2010.

Trail grooming has not been done on a regular basis, or at all, in the past few years. It appears that the trails were groomed twice in 2009 and not at all in 2008.

Discussion took place that generally supported more consistent grooming of the trails. Support was expressed for conducting grooming based on conditions and use with consideration of the unique characteristics of Sunfish Lake Park trails (notably that the trails are on relatively rolling terrain sheltered by the woodlands, which is much different than the trails in open areas of Lake Elmo Park Reserve).

MOTION: Support for consistent grooming of the Sunfish Lake Park trails that is appropriate for typical standards from like trail to like trail. (Approved 8-0 M/S, Steele/Larson)

Discussion on Sunfish Lake Park parking area improvements / planning

The 2010 Park Capital Improvement Program includes \$12,000 for “boulders, gate and landscaping” at Sunfish Lake Park. These improvements have been scheduled with the primary goal of “managing” and defining the parking area.

As indicated in the S.F.L.P. conservation easement, facilities and amenities shall be constructed with materials, textures and colors that are “natural” in character and consistent with the natural surroundings. Consequently, the Commission has expressed an interest in defining the parking area with the placement of boulders to serve as “barriers”.

Cost estimates on various boulder types if purchased from a twin cities landscape supplier were made available. The vast majority of these boulders are imported to the area from central Minnesota.

Blackford presented several photos of boulders on her property that had been acquired from the immediate area. She pointed out the unique colors, character and qualities of the boulders and expressed the interest in exploring opportunities for acquiring boulders locally. She also pointed out that the glacial history and related geology are very significant to the natural history and formation of Sunfish Lake Park. Given this, she also advocated for the eventual development and placement of an interpretive panel that could address the glacial, geological and natural history of the park. The notion of obtaining the boulders locally was also supported for reasons associated with minimizing transportation costs.

It was requested that pricing for boulders from local quarries be obtained and also that MPCA be contacted about the possibility of boulders being excavated and acquired from the landfill project site. There was also discussion about the planning / design involved in the placement of boulders and other landscape elements that will eventually serve as an effective parking area barrier. It was requested that staff develop a schematic plan for the area indicating general locations of boulders, trees, kiosk, rain garden and other amenities.

Pebble Park Woodland Restoration Interpretive Panel

A woodland restoration project began at Pebble Park in the fall of 2008. Since that time, very significant quantities of buckthorn have been removed and native seedlings

planted. Interest has been expressed in the placement of an interpretive panel near the site to educate the community on the project. A layout was reviewed.

Discussion reflected general support for educating the public and park users on the buckthorn issue/problem and the restoration project in general. Costs for a National Park Service quality sign and exhibit base were estimated at about \$900. Concern was expressed over the potential of vandalism of the panel. Steele expressed that he felt it was important to not “give in” to vandals while Dunn expressed that she felt there were other effective ways of educating the public, like the newsletter, that are not so costly

MOTION: Support placement of an interpretive panel at Pebble Park with a panel type and location yet to be determined. (Approved 7-1 with Dunn in dissent) Dunn explained that her vote in dissent was due to the cost of the project, she felt it was too much.

City Trail Plan – Base Trail Prioritization

The City’s Trail Guide plan suggests two parallel processes be developed to establish priorities for implementing the trail system. This would provide some overall direction for staff efforts and for funding the Capital Improvements Program.

Based on Base Trail priorities, the following objectives will then be pursued:

- Negotiate with HOA’s for public easement rights over portion of now-private trail system.
- Negotiate with private property owners for critical trail connections.
- Work to resolve other ROW issues
- Research grants / funding opportunities

As suggested, the Commission was asked to prioritize Base Trail development based on improving public safety and user group volume. Commissioners were asked to identify which trails they considered as a “top three” priority. The Commission prioritized the top 4 base trail priorities as follows:

Stillwater High School Trail (6 votes)
Gateway Trail (5 votes)
Lake Elmo Regional Park Trail (5 votes)
Southside Trail (4 votes)

Adjourned 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Kriegler,
Project Assistant