

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
Joint Meeting of the Parks & Recreation Commission
and City Council Workshop
City Hall
2077 West Larpentour Avenue

MINUTES

January 3, 2024 at 6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:35 P.M.

B. ROLL CALL:

Jeff Yager X Mike Bradbury X Eric Brenton X
Paula Mielke X Tom Faust X Randi Lundell X

COUNCIL LIAISON:

James Wassenberg X

STAFF PRESENT:

Kelly Nelson X Jack Linehan X

1. Community Park Renovation

Linehan introduces Bob Slipka from WSB (project manager), and Haley Koesters and Matt Lynse of HCM Architects.

Bob Slipka says he looked at Concept 3 from the layouts initially presented, which was the preferred concept, and then gave three updated variations of that. He explains that the immediate needs expressed were that the building, parking lot, and playground would be addressed. In Concept 1, he points out the play area is small to medium in size and would be relocated closer to the building. The tennis court would not be touched. The baseline cost is \$3 to \$3.5 million. The basketball court would be repaved and restriped in its existing location. The four add-on items listed as Bid Alternates (small shelter, large shelter, splash pad and basketball improvements) make Concept 1 an all-in cost of around 4.4 million dollars.

Concept 2: Most of the main pieces are staying the way that they are. The splash pad and play container are enlarged in this concept so the price increases. The parking lot and building are the same size as in Concept 1.

Concept 3: This concept adds a skating area to the project. Although not refrigerated, the pad would extend the life of the ice.

Lundell says that she likes all of the park layouts but suggests taking into consideration the walking paths near/around the playground for dog walkers so that they do not have to pass through but can walk around.

Haley Koesters of HCM Architects adds that the ice rink currently at Curtiss Field could be something added onto the Flex Lawn space in either Concept 1 or Concept 2.

Leehy asks if it is known where the water source would be in relation to the Community Gardens or for flooding the rink.

Slipka says that water improvements would be done as part of the building construction but it wouldn't be difficult to add a hydrant in.

Bradbury says he loves the multipurpose splash pad and ice rink in Concept 3 but wants to confirm that both can share that space. He adds that we would likely run into the same problem we run into at Curtiss, which is the challenge to keep the ice.

Linehan shares that putting a liner on the tennis court and flooding it to avoid paving additional space was also an earlier consideration.

Slipka says that they have budgeted for rubberizing the entire play area as inclusivity has come up multiple times.

Faust asks Bob if he can speak to the cost of the splash pad / ice rink combo presented in Concept 3.

Slipka says it's budgeted to be a splash pad as well so the slab isn't the same. If you have to figure out cutting costs, we may have to do the splash pad at a later date.

Leehy wonders what a comfortable capacity of play is for the splash pads in Concept 1, 2 and 3.

Slipka says that with 1,000 square feet, that would equate about 15 people. He mentions that he's done systems with interacting ground-level play as well (locks and dams).

Faust says that we keep talking about a splash pad and wonders if we have data from the public that is in favor of having a splash pad.

Mielke says that from the survey data, a splash pad was the most suggested amenity.

Bradbury suggests there may have been a bit of bias since every layout shown to the public included one in the initial drawings.

Mielke says that we have no feedback about an ice rink because that was not shown in any images previously.

Meyer says that from an informal Facebook post he made, a playground was the most popular, followed by a splash pad.

Leehy asks if Meyer's Facebook post came before or after the City's survey, once layouts were shown with possible amenities included in drawings.

Meyer says the Facebook post was approximately a week prior to the City's survey being published.

Bradbury wants to build for future use and not just the now. He wants to ensure that we can afford the upkeep so that amenities don't fall into disarray.

Slipka says that it's important to have foresight. Using Concept 1 as an example, maybe the playground is done now and a splash pad is added later. He goes on to say that there are regulations that mandate the distance a restroom can be from a splash pad. So, that has been taken into consideration when laying the park amenities out.

Wassenberg says it makes sense to prioritize the amenities and determine affordability.

Bradbury says that is how the previous Parks and Recreation meeting ended. The commission wanted the building, playground and parking lot to be a priority. He adds that if you look at Concept 3 and retain the green space now for a future ice rink, you could maybe add a skating loop to connect the tennis court to the playground area, etc.

Linehan asks Bob Slipka to comment on whether anyone in Minnesota has a splash pad within the skating area (multipurpose area). The inspiration photos the City had seen were from areas outside of the state.

Slipka says that Coon Rapids has a rink that has piping in it but they didn't invest in the chiller for it. Faribault is doing a skating loop right now but it's not going to be a fountain or splash pad.

Lundell says she likes a skating loop but it's not conducive to playing games on other than racing.

Bradbury says he wouldn't solely do a loop; he'd retain space to add a loop in to a future expansion.

Wassenberg would like to see the City use a liner to extend ice use.

Koesters suggests trying out the rink that is currently at Curtiss Field over at Community Park in the interim.

Meyer asks what the plan is for the tennis courts.

Slipka said that there are no plans to touch the tennis courts.

Bradbury and Leehy comment that adding lights and a backboard to the tennis courts would be nice.

Leehy asks for confirmation that we used to have separate rinks at Curtiss Field to separate hockey players from pleasure skaters.

Bradbury confirms this.

Mielke comments on the baseball field. The Parks and Recreation Commission had opted just to leave it for now. A future renovation phase could take a look at that space and how best to use it.

Yager feels Concept 3 might be the best bet for phasing in amenities. But, he wonders if there are any savings to doing certain projects at the same time as another.

Slipka says that overall, not really.

Wassenberg says we should consider what we can do now and then think about what we might do if we have or receive additional funding.

Mielke asks if there is a way to price out what it would cost to put a liner on the tennis court and use that as an ice rink.

Lundell wonders what the wear and tear on the tennis court would be.

Meyer says that pickleball is probably twice as popular as tennis. Is there a way to have it?

Lundell mentions how the neighbors in Falcon Woods were concerned about the noise. But, that was also coming from an earlier concept, when that court was positioned near their backyards.

Bradbury says if you were to stripe one part of the tennis court, the noise level wouldn't be the same as having multiple pickleball courts.

Wassenberg says that we can decide that at a later date.

Meyer asks commissioners and the Council to consider the placement of a band at an event like the City's Ice Cream Social. Where would we do that?

Wassenberg would like to touch on how we heat and cool the building.

Matt Lynse of HCM Architects says they have started talking to their engineers. He shares that the State of MN has allowed heat exchangers in the water table and they're way more efficient. He estimates 4 to 6 wells needed and in the \$70,000 to \$100,000 range.

Mielke asks for an update on the size of the building, wondering if the building is not being reduced in size, as it still appears large in the current images.

Lynse says the square footage has been reduced from an earlier plan of 2,900 to approximately 2,500 square feet.

Lynse asks the Council and Parks and Recreation Commissioners if they want the Community Room to face out into the park or onto Roselawn.

The consensus is for it to face out into the park.

Lynse then walks the Council and Commission through two floor plans for the building. The main difference is the roof slope. Lynse explains that one of them is more favorable for solar, although the picnic shelter area would still provide an area for solar panels.

Leehy asks if there would be grills located under the picnic shelter.

Lynse suggests not having them under the shelter. Instead, there would be counters to place Crockpots instead.

Linehan shares that the smaller picnic area will need to be removed and replaced to allow for the parking lot construction. The idea would be to add grills in that area.

Leehy asks about standing snow on the roofline.

Lynse says that the roof has a 4 -12 pitch and it's a proven technology. It would have ice and water shield and 30-year shingles.

Lundell asks if the Flex Room could swap locations with the Storage Room so that the Flex Room has a view of the playground AND the Community Room is south-facing into the park.

Faust asks Matt, of HCM Architects, for his preferences.

Lynse thinks the Community Room should face the park. He likes the first and third rooflines shown.

Slipka says that depending on the size of the splash pad, some park buildings house mechanics in a building and some have an exterior box.

Gustafson asks if the splash pad water could be captured and reused for the Community Garden.

Slipka says that would be a flow through system but you could have a 1,000-gallon underground tank to capture water for the gardens. He adds that with regular maintenance, you can get about 20 years out of a splash pad.

Linehan asks if there's a point where we might get close to triggering the need for stormwater.

Slipka says he doesn't have an answer right now but conversations have been started. He shares that the larger the splash pad, the more likely.

Linehan reminds the group that these are all ideas on paper. If you like a circular splash pad but Concept 3's playground size, that's moveable and changeable.

Linehan goes on to share that the Council has agreed to budget \$3.5 million. \$2 million will be paid in cash with \$1.5 million in rebate bonds. The debt service of 20 years would be manageable and residents would likely feel a minimal tax increase with it.

The two wild cards are that we have requested one million dollars for bonding in 2024, but we likely wouldn't find out until July. The second part of that is that the City will apply for a \$350,000 DNR grant (funds would be 100% matched by the City). We will apply for that again this March. The possibility would be to fund a future phase item from that.

Faust asks for confirmation that the idea would be to ask HCM and WSB to keep placeholder spots in the park for future buildouts as dollars are awarded in the form of bonding and/or grants.

Linehan confirms this.

Wassenberg suggests we confirm what the fixed items are. Then, to determine the size of the variable items and then rank those by preference.

Yager says that the best-case scenario is that you get 10 weeks or so of skating with a concrete pad. He wonders if we want to retain green space and have a more temporary skating area instead.

Linehan says he would like the Council and Parks Commission to get down to two concepts instead of three.

Wassenberg points out that there are two flex lawn areas in Concept 2 from WSB.

The Commission and Council favor Concept 2 of the park layout, with modifications. They would like to reduce the size of the splash pad shown.

Faust says that we had a lot of good discussion on the multi-use plaza. Do we want to get a bid on the multi-use or just the splash pad?

Meyer said he's in favor of pricing out just a splash pad since we have a great ice rink nearby in Roseville.

Leehy asks if we want the large shelter orientated like it's shown in Concept 1 or in Concept 2?

Wassenberg says Concept 2.

Linehan says we are essentially merging Concepts 1 and 2. Looking at Concept 1, if we shrink the shelter's width and reorient it, increase the playground's square footage up to potentially 7,500 square feet, and shrink the distance between the building and the shelter, the result is a merging of Concepts 1 and 2.

Wassenberg adds that in order to keep the functionality of the large picnic structure, it might be helpful to keep the length of the building to create the walkway.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:26 PM

Commissioner Lundell motioned to
adjourn;
Approved 6-0