

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday October 15, 2012

Members Present: Chairperson Zeno, Ames, Steele, DeLapp, Weis, Blackford
Members Absent: Hartley (Excused), Sullivan (Excused), Hieptas (Excused)
Others Present: Administrator Zuleger, DPW Bouthilet

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mike Zeno at 7:02 PM.

A. M/S/P: DeLapp, Ames: To approved the agenda as posted.

B. Presentations

1. Friends of the Stillwater Dog Park

Joanna Tom, a representative of the Friends of the Stillwater Dog Park made a presentation, via Powerpoint and handouts, on the efforts to secure a site for a dog park. She noted that they have made similar presentations to Bayport, Oak Park Heights, Stillwater, and Stillwater Township. The group's hope is to secure a site that would serve the greater the St. Croix Valley. Their site would ideally have both a small dog compound and a large dog area. The site will be handicap accessible. It was noted that a dog park has a community benefit in that it provides a third place for taxpayers to gather. In addition, a dog park does aid in the licensing of dogs (a prerequisite for entrance). The formal presentation ended with a request from the Lake Elmo Park Commission to consider the possibility of using current park land for a dog park. Commissioner Ames asked a series of questions relating to dog park location and noted that most of the dog parks in the metro area are located in denser areas that become magnet, regional parks. The representatives noted that dog parks do attract out of town visitors. Commissioner Steele asked if there was a way to estimate usage for Lake Elmo residents. Friends President Allison McGinnis noted that there were a number of Lake Elmo supporters and that use would be dictated by size and parking. She also noted that there are over 40 dog parks of various sizes in the Twin Cities. Commissioner Weis noted that he was familiar with the ones at Battle Creek and White Bear Lake. Commissioner Steele noted that this would be an excellent item to include in the upcoming park's survey. Tom noted that it is not anticipated that a dog park would put a burden on the community. It will be staffed and managed by volunteers from the Friends group. Commissioner Ames noted that most of the dog's parks he has visited have been cleaned and well-maintained. Commissioner Weis asked about licensing. Zuleger noted that the standard fare is that dogs must be licensed to have entry into the park. This insures vaccinations are up-to-date.

Ms. McGinnis brought the group up to speed on current discussions with Bayport and Stillwater. She also noted a recent effort in Cottage Grove failed. Steve DeLapp asked about the possibility of using the Lake Elmo Park Reserve. Ms. McGinnis noted that Mike Pohlana was not in favor of locating a dog park in Washington County parks. Commissioner Weis asked if the group had a Lake Elmo Park in mind. Ms. McGinnis noted that Sunfish Lake Park had been suggested. Commissioner Blackford noted that there are plenty of nice areas to walk dogs in Lake Elmo and that she had heard from Marty Dobbs from the Sunfish Lake Park West area that in his opinion the park was probably not well suited for this use. Commissioner Steele reiterated that the need will be best determined by the survey. Commissioner Ames / Steele both noted that they did not want the Friends of the Stillwater Dog Park to view the Commission as hostile and that they wish to keep the dialogue open.

C. M/S/P: Ames / DeLapp: To approve the minutes of 9-17-2012

D. Park Survey Sub-Committee Report

Administrator Zuleger reviewed a written report from the Survey Subcommittee noting that it was suggested that the survey have three parts:

1. Measure Current Park, Open Space & Trail Usage;
2. Citizen Wants & Needs for Park System;
3. Creative Ideas for Park Programming.

Commissioner Ames asked how the Park Commission will capture the sense of those who use our parks and why people may not use our parks. Commissioner Blackford noted that she would like to see some questions with regard to natural areas, and naturalist programming. Commissioner Ames hoped that the survey would also ask some specific park-type questions. Commissioner Steele noted that the survey could drill down from broad to specific if structured correctly. The Commission engaged in a discussion on methodology and determined to create an RFP using an open bid process. Zuleger noted that \$5,000 may be too little for a survey company to attempt a 500 sample survey. It was suggested that maybe some of the local universities may wish to participate. Steele noted that St. Thomas would be interested if we could pay the students. Zuleger noted that he would prepare a survey RFP and circulate it. After the Commission received a response from the RFP the next Commission meeting would be scheduled.

Zuleger next presented a draft park use policy. The policy establishes a user priority system that favors use of Lake Elmo Residents first, which the Commission endorsed. Mike Bouthilet noted that VFW Park should be added as a field available for reservation. The Commission had a lengthy conversation on outside resident and athletic organizations use of Lake Elmo parks. Typically the City of Lake Elmo takes park reservations in January. Commissioner Ames suggested allowing Lake Elmo residents the month of January to reserve parks and opening up other reservations in February – including athletic associations. Zuleger was instructed to add language to the use policy that would define maximum use and language that would release time back to the City if the park will not be used. If a conflict of use arises, the use would be determined by the priority. Ames suggested talking with Lake Elmo Baseball and sharing our concerns with them about block reservations. He also noted that since this would be a new policy that it should be implemented as a “good faith” pilot project for the first year. Commissioner Steele questioned the fee language included in the policy. Zuleger noted that it was only for extended blocking of time that is done in advance of 10 days of the event. Ames noted that the school district charges for field use. Commissioner Blackford noted that she would like the language changed in the use policy to reflect that park users could interact with plants, trees, etc if so noted in the park rules. She noted that interaction with nature is a hallmark of Lake Elmo parks. Zuleger will present an amended version of the use policy at the next Commission meeting.

E. Lake Elmo Trail Planning

Commissioner Shane Weis noted that out of curiosity and interest he had engaged in a planning exercise on a 3.2 mile of trail that was called out in the City Trail Plan along Highway 5. Weis noted that his estimate ranged from \$48 -\$55 per linear foot based on pavement thickness. He also noted that he had not estimated any in-house work from the City staff in his estimate. Weis noted that his point was that a trail of this length would exhaust a good amount of the current funds in the parkland dedication account. Weis suggested that the Commission begin to explore grant options. Zuleger noted that Mayor Johnston had just become Chairman of the Met Council’s Open Space and Parks Commission and that he might be helpful in identifying grants. In addition, City Engineer Jack Griffin has contacts with MNDOT officials on grant eligibility. The Commission asked Zuleger to have a MNDOT official speak to the group after the first of the year. The Commission thanked Weis for his work and noted that trail planning should also be included in the parks survey.

F. MPCA Grant for Sunfish Lake Park / Forestry Program

The Commission suggested the best place to re-start the discussion with the MPCA would be the compensation for the 70 acres of land lost for use.

Zuleger noted to Commission that the City Council was made aware of the fact that the Park Commission would like the forestry program restored at the 2012 level.

H. Next Meeting Date

The City Administrator will advise to the next meeting date pending the receipt of RFPS for the park survey.

Chairman Zeno declared the meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Dean Zuleger, Recording Secretary