

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Parks Commission October 16, 2017

Members Present: Chair Frick, Commissioners Ames, Mayek, Nelson, Olinger, Pearce, Steele, and Zeno

Members Absent: Commissioner Nuenfeldt

Staff Present: City Administrator Handt, Public Works Lead Worker Colemer, Planning Director Becker, City Planner Prchal

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

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Olinger to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Frick. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Frick requested that there be a change to the minutes, to add 'motion passed', in the Village Park Preserve section. Frick also suggested that a change to the Staff Reports section regarding the Sunfish Lake Park Guide not the Sunfish Forest Management that was previously approved. Steele requested a change to the Village Park Preserve section to remove expressed from his comments.

Motion by Frick, seconded by Olinger to approve the minutes with the changes suggested.
Motion passed.

Recognition of Shane Weis

Frick stated that the Parks Commission had requested that we provide recognition to Shane Weis for his years and hours of service. Frick mentioned that the Parks Commission is a volunteer board and thanked the Commission for spending the evening volunteering. She also thanked staff for putting the recognition together.

Steele suggested the addition of the Chair and Mayor signing the recognition.

Frick made a motion to approve the Resolution recognizing Shane Weis. Pearce seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Adopt-a-Park Program

Colemer stated that Public Works has decided to take over the Adopt-a-Park Program. They will keep track of who is adopting the parks and recognize them. Three parks within the city have previously been adopted; however, the families are no longer in the city.

Zeno said he is a supporter of the program. He stated that it provides community ownership of the parks. He would also like to see the signs with the names of the individuals that adopted the parks located near the park signs so they are more visible.

Frick asked if it would just be families that would be allowed to adopt parks or if HOA's could. Steele suggested that protocol information is established and added to the City website. Frick made a motion for staff to further explore the program, draft a policy and bring it back before the Commission. Motion passed.

Central Greenway Regional Trail Update

Becker presented that the County selected SRF Consulting from the Request for Proposal to develop routes for the trail. A technical advisory committee will be established and meet 3-5 times to providing updates on the trails and getting feedback from residents. Staff would like to see someone from the Parks Commission on the technical advisory committee.

The study will be completed by December 31, 2018.
Mayek volunteered to be on the committee.

Sunfish Lake Forest Management Plan

Becker stated that at the June 19th Parks Commission meeting the breakdown of the Sunfish Forest Management Plan was discussed. At that meeting two members had volunteered to go out and do an assessment of the park. Frick sent an email to staff mentioning the location of the greatest amount of windfall damage in the north and south in the park. The restoration of the south site and buckthorn removal were recommended.

Frick further explained she is not an arborist and did not identify trees except if obvious, like laying across the trail. She mentioned that she would be happy to send Public Works a map of trees that have fallen along the trail. She described the area in the most need as the north part of the park near the Tapestry neighborhood. It is esthetically displeasing and is likely a fire hazard. She said she identified this section in the north as first priority, then another section in the south, followed by addressing oak wilt. She said that Buckthorn is a huge issue within the park especially to the south and west, however since it is such a large amount, the manual removal methods would take a long time. She suggested that in talking with the Mayor and City Administrator the idea of using goats had been discussed and would likely be the best way to address the issue, but it takes time and planning to rent the goats.

Olinger mentioned that she looked at the park more as a whole. She determined the same location as Frick, near the Tapestry neighborhood, that has the most dry dead wood that should be removed from the park as a starting point.

Handt said that this information could be taken back to the Public Works Director and determine if this work could be handled by staff this winter in January or February. Public Works will have to prioritize snow removal this winter but will work on tree removal when they can.

Colemer requested that Public Works be provided access from Tapestry to do the tree removal in order to cut a lot of time off the project, since that is the location the trees. The City was never given access easement to the park from the neighborhood.

Continental Concept PUD Plan Review

Becker shared that the City has received a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and a Concept Plan Review for a PUD for a 300 unit multifamily development. There are no parks planned within the development and no trail is designated along the future road. The trail plan does indicate a trail should be installed there. The City would require a trail along the street that connects 5th Street to Hudson Blvd.

The Planning Commission requested that the Parks Commission review this application to determine if there is a need for a private Tot Lot within the development, maintained by the Property Management. And have it be a condition of approval, provided the development moves forward.

Continental provided statistics on their typical demographics within the state with 9% of residents being between the ages of 0-17.

Continental is providing amenities including a dog park, pool, clubhouse, fitness center, outdoor bbq.

Frick made a motion to support staff recommendation to approve a trail over a sidewalk and that we would not recommend the need for a Tot Lot or land dedication, but accept the park dedication fee

Zeno stated that if the trail is constructed along the road, it will be used as a sidewalk and not a trail. He recommended that it would be safer for bikers to have a lane on the road, not a trail next to the road.

Steele asked if it was unrealistic to request that the road be 6 ft. wider and a sidewalk be installed.

Staff stated that the motion did not get seconded and the motion failed.

Steele made a motion to approve an extra 3 ft. wide striped shoulder lane on each side along the road for bikes and approve a 6 ft. wide sidewalk for pedestrians, that the City would accept the fee for the Parkland Dedication, and not require a Tot Lot. Mayek seconded the motion.

Pearce said he agrees with the staff recommendation of a trail for consistency with the area. The motion failed with a vote of 3 to 4.

Pearce made a motion to approve staff recommendation of a trail instead of a sidewalk, that the City would accept the fee for the Parkland Dedication, and not require a Tot Lot. Frick seconded the motion. Motion passed 4 to 3. Dissenting were Zeno, Steele, and Mayek.

Fire Arm Hunt in Sunfish Lake Park

Colemer stated that he has received a number of calls from hunters regarding hunting in Sunfish Lake Park, wanting to know if it will be happening again this year.

Colemer said staff is considering allowing bow hunting instead of firearm.

Frick mentioned that archery season is longer than firearm season.

Zeno asked if the park would be closed during hunting season.

Colemer stated that the City in the past couple years has followed the dates the County allows hunting in the park reserve.

Discussion about the number of deer in the area, the need for the hunt, if data was available to support the need, how many hunters would be allowed, type of hunt. Discussion to table or deny the hunt in Sunfish Lake Park due to lack of data to support the need. Additional discussion about timing and if it would need Council approval and be past the firearm season.

Motion passed to deny the two-day hunt in Sunfish Lake Park.

Sunfish Lake Park Biking

Handt mentioned that this item was scheduled for the September meeting, which was cancelled and that the Council has been discussing the Sunfish Lake Park Development and Usage Plan at their workshops. The Council gave direction to staff to contact the MN Land Trust to let them know the City would be looking at different usage of the park. Last week at the Council Workshop, the Council gave the direction of staff to work with the Parks Commission to develop a plan to allow mountain biking on separate trails from walkers, runners, and horseback riders in the park. There is information in your packet discussing biking and in 1992 was prohibited. There was a recodification of the City ordinances in 2007 and there is nothing in there prohibiting mountain biking. After meeting with the MN Land Trust, there is nothing that prohibits mountain biking in the conservation easement, but they did point out that there are erosion control requirements.

Frick stated that in 1994 Council voted to ban mountain biking in Sunfish Lake Park.

Handt explained that when the City recodifies the City Code that they repealed the old code and adopted the new code, verified by the City Attorney. If it is not included in the current code, that means that ordinance no longer exists.

Frick asked about how this may affect the CIP.

Handt stated that council will have the last say on the CIP. She mentioned it just came out of the Finance committee last week and will go to the Planning Commission in November and to the Council in December. If it is something the Council wants to pursue, then they could amend the CIP in December for which year they want to allow for it.

Pearce asked if there are any mountain biking parks.

Handt said she thought the County Park Reserve allows mountain biking, but none in City parks.

Steele stated that he feels there is a 25 year precedent of there not wanting mountain biking in Sunfish Lake Park and that the council has decided to not consult the Parks Commission in the decision to move forward with the ability to mountain bike in the park. Steele feels it is a larger issue that the Council went around a volunteer body of residents and not able to provide public feedback. Steele is concerned about the rush on the process. He is also concerned with maintaining the park.

Frick stated that there has been some residents expressing concern about being left out of meetings and not having their opinions heard. Frick also mentioned that there was not a formal decision regarding mountain biking in Sunfish Lake Park, there has been no public input on this decision despite years of an understanding that there is no biking.

Rolf Larson, mentioned this process is moving quickly and something that isn't being discussed, but should be considered is that a portion of the park is currently reserved for wildlife habitat. If a trail is run through the middle of this section it will ruin the protected habitat.

Zeno suggested that a moratorium be placed on bikes using Sunfish Lake Park at least until May strictly on an erosion control perspective. He would like feedback on the soils at the park. Zeno feels the park is already dense with trails and adding more for separate mountain biking trails takes away from the park. Zeno enjoys mountain biking and would like to see a park in the city, but does not feel this is the park for the trails.

Mayek said he feels the trails were designed for multi-use. He feels a lot of the erosion comes from equestrian use. He also feels the trails were poorly designed for Nordic skiers, the hills are too steep and curves are too sharp. If these were smoothed out it would also cut down on the erosion happening in the park and would cut down on the need for maintenance.

Frick said that she is a trail runner and frequents Sunfish Lake Park, county, and regional parks. She feels that she experiences the same level of traffic in all of the parks she frequents and is concerned there is a desire to increase the usage of Sunfish Lake Park, partially due to safety reasons since visibility in the park is lower than some of the other trails she uses.

Olinger said that although we do have a tradition of no biking in Sunfish Lake Park, there have been other things that have changed over the last 25 years. There has been growth and change within the community. Olinger also mentioned that since this topic keeps coming up over the years, there is clearly a population that is interested in this. She stated that it is something she feels obligated to thoughtfully consider, including taking safety, habitat, and other issues into consideration. Olinger said she would like to see the Commission move forward on developing a plan and not focus on whether they agree or approve of the use.

Zeno would like to take the focus of putting bike trails into Sunfish Lake Park and put the effort into installing mountain biking trails into Lake Elmo.

Frick made a motion for the City Staff to solicit Trail Source and other appropriate trail experts to provide advice on mountain bike trail areas within the City, looking at potential parks and providing analysis of our options. Steele seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Pickleball

Frick stated that John Ames had read an article in the Pioneer Press and asked if the Parks Commission should reconsider putting Pickleball courts in our parks. Frick said she thought this would be more of a discussion than adding it to the 2020 plan.

Handt stated that in the 2020 plan that it was kept generic to allow the construction of a new park, not a specific location, type, or what it would entail. This could be rolled into that funding.

There was discussion that Pickleball was discussed for the Wildflower development briefly. Frick said that an Inwood neighborhood resident has mentioned there is interest within their neighborhood for a Pickleball court.

Mark Ruppert, an Inwood resident discussed that Pickleball is one of the top fastest growing sports in the country, especially for the 50+ demographic. Ruppert said that he had developed a program in Oakdale where he lived previously, including teaching Pickleball. He also stated that he would like to help with the development of the park near Inwood.

Steele mentioned it would be good to know where existing Pickleball courts are located in the area. Handt replied that Becker included a list of them in the staff report to the Commission.

Colemer said that he thinks putting Pickleball in Lion's Park would be a good use of the seldom used tennis courts.

Zeno stated that he loves the idea of Pickleball courts. Zeno would like to stripe some of the existing tennis courts to allow for Pickleball.

Handt said that restriping courts with good surfaces could be considered maintenance on the park and would not need to go through the CIP process. Anything that is \$25,000 or more goes into the CIP approval process.

No motion needed on this item.

November Meeting

Preliminary Plat for Gonyea West
A development southwest of the Northport development
Work plan for 2018

Staff Reports and Commission Update

Handt gave an update on the Royal Golf Park Dedication fee. Handt stated that the fee was increased to over \$600,000.

Handt reported that Savona Park is being graded where the playground equipment will be located.

Colemer reported that the rubber mulch was installed at Easton Village and that there will be minor restoration to do at the park due to equipment being used to install the mulch.

Colemer stated that mulch was delivered for Ridge Park.

Handt mentioned that Lions Park is on track to be completed by next month so that it can be ready for spring to complete.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Tanya Nuss**