

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday, September 16, 2013

Members Present: Chairperson Weis, Steele, Hartley, Hieptas, Silvernale, Zeno (7:25)

Members Absent: Ames

Others Present: Administrator Zuleger, SPW Bouthilet, Planning Commissioner Larson, Taxpayer Relations & Communications Coordinator MacLeod; Parks Maintainer Nicklay; Teresa Silvernale – resident representing Sanctuary neighborhood

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Weis at 6:37 PM.

Approval of Agenda

Steele suggested adding Item F under Old Business, the renaming of Sunfish Lake Park. Weis suggested adding Item B under New Business for a potential RFQ for landscape architect to implement things in survey.

M/S/P: Hartley/Steele: Agenda approved as amended. Approved 5-0

Approval of August 19, 2013 Minutes

Steele suggested the following additions: clarifying the two points of conflict and expensive reengineering of trails, and adding context around his comment about the inability to accurately measure park usage for one day – adding Mayor Pearson's comment about seeing only a few people in Sunfish Lake Park on a particular survey.

M/S/P: Steele/Hartley: Minutes approved as amended. Approved 5-0

Acknowledge Resignation of Judith Blackford

Weis unsure how to technically acknowledge resignation. Moved on to old business, to revisit resignation.

Old Business

a. Sanctuary Park Survey Results (Silvernale)

J. Silvernale announced that a survey was sent out to Sanctuary residents. Sanctuary resident, Teresa Silvernale, discussed the survey results with commissioners. T. Silvernale stated that the survey was issued to 40 homes; 26 were returned. The survey asked questions about what features residents wanted to see in their park, and if the lack of visibility was a concern. Only four individuals responded that they were concerned with visibility and no one was opposed to the park. Silvernale then asked the commission what the next steps were.

Weis asked Bouthilet if the survey was scheduled. Bouthilet responded that they were waiting on survey results. Weis asked T. Silvernale if there was a preliminary park design included with the original plat. Bouthilet responded that the developer had designed a nature-preserve type park into the plan that was not focused on recreational use. Steele asked for clarification. Bouthilet responded that it was more of a "walk-through" park.

Silvernale noted that they have youth toddler-aged to teens in the neighborhood, so they would need a range of amenities. She expressed that despite the restriction and lack of visibility with the land, they would still like to see some equipment there. Weis asked for clarification regarding whether they would like to see different types of equipment for different ages. Silvernale confirmed that she would like to see a basketball court as well as a play structure for toddlers. Weis asked Bouthilet if there were any restrictions to get disc golf. Zuleger and Bouthilet responded that the amount of land would allow for approximately six holes; nine is preferable.

Zuleger suggested starting with one to three holes to evaluate interest. Steele noted that disc golf seemed to be the least desired activity/amenity as indicated on the survey. Weis asked what the cost would be to create the path. Bouthilet stated that they would need to do the survey first on the land. Steele asked T. Silvernale why the continuation of a walking path was so popular. T. Silvernale explained that they have a lot of walkers in the neighborhood, and it would give dog-walkers a place to allow their dogs to run. Zuleger noted that the City does not allow dogs to run free.

Hartley inquired whether there was enough land to put in a soccer field. T. Silvernale stated that they were wondering what to do with the land at the bottom of the sledding hill. They were envisioning it more as an open area to play, not a full soccer field.

Steele expressed that the Sanctuary neighborhood is organized and came forth stating what their park needs are. Steele added that other neighborhoods haven't come forth yet, but anticipated that if the survey were given to them, they might see similar results. Steele asked Zuleger how cities usually respond to this kind of situation and how to prioritize spending. Zuleger responded that regarding the Sanctuary Park, the land and funds have already been set aside to comply with parkland dedication. Zuleger also mentioned that the idea with this park was to connect two neighborhoods (Sanctuary and Carriage Station) and would be a good fit to include a potential third neighborhood – the Getschel property purchased by Landucci (to be sold to Gonyea Homes).

Zuleger pointed out on a map where the Getschel property is located, and described the plan for future development and vision for the park area. He clarified that there would be approximately 110 homes total between new development and Sanctuary. Hartley asked how the lack of parking would affect the park. T. Silvernale compared the park to Carriage Station park where there is no parking available but still highly attended. Commissioners expressed that they had received complaints about the lack of parking. Hietpas pointed out that the Carriage Station Park is at the entrance of the neighborhood, thus receiving a high amount of traffic.

Bouthilet mentioned that the plan is leaning toward the park becoming more of a regional area for active recreation (between three neighborhoods), and that a play structure in the same area and some off-street parking would be appropriate. Bouthilet also mentioned that they are considering modifying the plan to fit the new philosophy regarding size and activity use of neighborhood parks.

Zuleger said that the people developing the Getschel property know that there will be some allocation to parks. Steele said that the park seems to make sense, but only if the bottom part fits and serves both neighborhoods. Weis asked the commission if this park is something that they would want to design in house or hire out. Weis asked Zuleger if it is usually done in house or if they hire out. Zuleger responded that when they are looking to spruce parks up, they usually use landscape architects. He mentioned that the city has capability in house with Focus Engineering to design the parks and drainage issues....etc. Zuleger stated that some of the playground equipment companies will have staff to help with the design.

Steele expressed the concern that keeps coming up is maintenance and wonders if the additional parks are going to be a problem with maintenance. Bouthilet responded that we can keep up better now that we have a dedicated park staff person (Bouthilet introduced Matt Nicklay to the commission). Steele suggested designing a master plan for the park; Weis asked who should do the master plan. Zuleger suggested a meeting with a neighborhood subcommittee to review equipment catalogs, to start with priorities (playground equipment and survey for trail) and the next step would be working with the landowners.

Steele suggested designing to look at the city park survey, taking into consideration that other people may be using it, and they should keep greater uses in mind. Teresa stated that people have been waiting for this park, and the funds have been there.

Hartley suggested adding the park discussion to the CIP agenda item at the Park Retreat on the 28th. Weis asked J. Silvernale to head up a sub-committee in the neighborhood to begin outlining park needs. Bouthilet suggested working with an equipment company to create a concept plan on paper to review at the retreat, and

to show to the Sanctuary residents. Steele asked the commission to consider park signage when creating a concept plan and questioned where the signage would be.

T. Silvernale inquired what to look for and budget when researching equipment. Zuleger discussed considering options for play structures in regard to theming, and interactivity/learning based. Zuleger also mentioned considering progressive structures to fit needs of multiple age groups. Zuleger said it would be up to the neighborhood to decide on theme and colors.

T. Silvernale asked for clarification regarding next steps. Zuleger replied that the survey for the trail is next, followed by Bouthilet working with equipment companies to develop a concept plan and would bring results to J. Silvernale. Silvernale (J) asked about price range. Zuleger responded that determining a budget is a bit premature; will discuss more at the retreat. Steele advised to keep in mind the other neighborhoods and their needs in terms of fund disbursement.

M/S/P: Hartley/Steele: to approve staff to go forward with survey and recommended site plan for Sanctuary park. Approved 5-0

b. MPCA (Hietpas)

Hietpas stated that the commission waited too long and no funds are available for MCC crew for fall, but Bouthilet had contacted MPCA and funds were extended. Deadline requirements: plan sheet showing proposed location, types of trees/shrubs by March 1st (done), final list of plants and shrubs by April 1, ordered and delivered around May 1st. If not finished by June 30th (end of their fiscal year) they would lose the funds. Hietpas expressed that the spring may work out better than fall because they will have access to more trees. Bouthilet talked about the different species of trees and costs. Bouthilet mentioned that he is trying to line up an Eagle Scout project to plant some trees. Hartley states that spring makes more sense to plant as well, due to drought conditions. Bouthilet asked if the dog park is off the table, as it would factor into the planting. Zuleger said that the commission took action previously to ban a dog park as well as a neighborhood petition to avoid a dog park. Hietpas confirmed that the schedule would be based on when they could get on the MCC schedule to get trees ordered.

c. Sunfish Lake Gate Project (Bouthilet)

Bouthilet suggested taking the opportunity now to create a single entrance with split drive, rather than pay for double gates. Steele questioned whether there a reason to have two drives? Bouthilet responded that creating one drive would require significant grading. Weis asked what the relative project cost would be. Bouthilet stated there was no pricing on road reconfiguration as it would be done in house. He said that the cost for the gate system would depend on which of three options was selected. Bouthilet mentioned that the gate costs would be approximately: typical park gate (\$8,650), sliding gate (\$13,750) + \$5,000 additional cost per gate for power.

The commissioners discussed the benefits of each gate type in terms of strength and ability to withstand winter weather conditions. The commissioners also discussed specifics on how each gate would operate including timing mechanisms, security and ability to leave the park.

Steele expressed concern about cost, asks how much the gate is needed. Zuleger confirms that not having a gate is a large problem with the park is underutilized, and known to be used for negative activities. Zuleger mentioned that deputies on patrol have confirmed that Sunfish Park warrants concern. Zeno suggested moving the parking lot to the front of the park. Steele expressed concern that that the gate would be taken as a suggestion rather than enforcement.

Bouthilet added that the new gate would be used as an opportunity to redo signage and rebrand parks.

M/S/P: Weis/Zeno: to approve amount up to \$18k for single swing arm barrier gate for Sunfish Lake Park. Approved 6-0

d. Forestry Budget Request Update (Zuleger)

Zuleger provided an update that at the last council meeting for levy that the council allocated \$20k for forestry budget. The council will now be going for RFPs (statement of qualification) for contract services (pruning, replanting) and to provide review work for new development. Zuleger mentioned a meeting with Met council confirming a new number between 11,700 and 24,000 (estimated at approximately \$16 - \$18k – sewer units to decrease from 6,600 to 4,000) will be a new target for development; when number is met the MOU will go away. Zuleger clarified that the budgeted \$20k would go toward practical applied forestry work, and the other expenses for services including landscape and tree design would be covered through escrow agreements by developer. Zeno asked what is an MOU? Zuleger responded that it is a “Memorandum of Understanding,” a legally binding contract with Met Council regarding growth, due to losing a court case. Zuleger said there would still be a need for a forester consultant and they would be considered as part of the consultant pool. Zuleger mentioned that restoring the forestry program through council could be considered a minor victory for the park commission. Bouthilet added that the position would be filled by a Board Certified Master Arborist, and that they would need review, inspect, and re-inspect new design plans.

Zuleger introduces Rolf Larson as the Planning Commission liaison to the Park Commission. Zuleger added that Reeves would be there as well, but is out of town, and that the purpose of adding liaisons is an effort to get the commissions/council working well together.

Bouthilet provided an update regarding damage in Sunfish and the health of the forest. At the request of Mayor Pearson, they were sending out a consultant from the DNR Forestry Division to do an assessment and to propose possibilities to address the damage.

e. Deer Hunt (Bouthilet)

Bouthilet mentioned that we joined the county hunt for the first time in 1996 (yielding 24 deer in Sunfish), in 1999 (yielding 7 deer), and in 2005 (yielding 12 deer). The City asked the county to join the hunt again this year. An Aerial shows 43 deer per sq. mile in the Sunfish; typical numbers should be within 20 to 25 per square mile. Bouthilet added that the County usually conducts the hunt during two consecutive weekends, but the city would only be joining during the first weekend. Bouthilet added that the park will be closed during the hunt, with all entrances fenced off, and that notice would be posted two weeks in advance. Bouthilet mentioned that the city was conducting a resident only lottery for hunt. This year the city will be limiting hunting in the northern zone by Tapestry.

Weis asked if there are there any problems with coyotes? Zuleger confirmed that there is a problem based on feedback from a MnDNR game warden. Zuleger continued that the problem with coyotes is that in the mange they can carry disease and be dangerous, primarily around kids and pets. Hietpas requested the numbers. Zuleger wasn't able to confirm but expressed that anecdotally there are more complaints this year, and they are also getting a lot of calls on foxes. Hietpas expressed that she has a problem removing animals that aren't necessarily dangerous. Zuleger states the last community he worked with they posted caution signs. Hietpas stated that she has an understanding that there is a direct correlation of coyote population and song birds. The hunt will be a shotgun only hunt and hunters will need to buy harvest tags (one buck with their license and as many does as they can).

M/S/P: Hartley/Zeno: to approve deer hunt in Sunfish Lake Park. Approved 5-0 Steele abstain.

Zuleger added that a motion would have to go through council as well.

f. Renaming of Sunfish Lake Park (Steele)

Steele wanted to revisit the suggestion to rename Sunfish Lake Park as he didn't believe they had heard a response from council when the renaming was a suggested by the council several months ago. Zuleger said that it would go on the October 1st agenda. He confirmed that staff believes it's the proper name for the park.

Steele asked if it would be wise to go back about and re-confirm the prohibition of mountain biking? Zuleger clarified that when the code was recodified the ordinance banning mountain biking was not carried over. He added that the ordinance stands firm as the land trust supercedes code.

Hietpas pointed out that renaming the park would be timely with a redesign of entrance with new sign. Zuleger added that renaming the park as a preserve instead of a park matches up with what people want in the survey. He added that the item would be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Weis asked if there is any other park in Lake Elmo besides Sunfish that SAHS could use for mountain biking? Zuleger responded that other parks don't have enough land to offer. Zeno suggested Demontreville Wildlife Park as having adequate space and terrain but doesn't think mountain biking should be allowed in any parks unless the soils are analyzed to make sure that the trails can handle the activity. Zeno contacted MN Off-road cyclist and stated they might have interest in taking a look and designing/building trails in the park. Zuleger clarified that currently there is no ordinance that prohibits mountain biking in any parks; it is prohibited by the land trust. Bouthilet confirmed that the proper signage is in place to reflect the restriction.

Bouthilet mentioned that Demontreville Wildlife Park would be a good candidate for disc golf. Reid was suggested as another possibility.

Zeno discussed the possibility of using the landfill to be used for mountain biking – with some slight terrain modifications. The hope is that designating a place to bike would save other places. Zuleger stated that he has it down as a retreat topic.

New Business

a. ADA Requirements for Park & Open Space (Steele)

Steele suggested that the city creates a policy to ensure we are compliant with ADA requirements for parks – that cities have undergone lawsuits due to noncompliance. Based on the US Department of Justice guide for small towns and ADA requirements Steele suggests that the city forms a subcommittee to conduct an audit of parks, and could take the considerations toward the CIP. Bouthilet mentioned that ADA is factored into installations (everything since 1992 is ADA compliant); he thought an audit could assist with creating formal documentation. Steele expressed another concern being handicap parking. Weis asked what the audit would entail. Zuleger stated that the National Park & Rec Association has audits available online. Bouthilet stated the importance of keeping up with ADA rules as new rules come out each year. City staff would conduct the audit (Nicklay – Park Maintainer).

M/S/P: Weis/Steele: recommend to staff to conduct annual ADA compliant audit on parks. 6-0

b. Potential for RFQ for park Design Service

Weis expressed concern about getting a plan in place to move forward and implement some of the suggestions brought forth through the survey and would like to be prepared to include items in the CIP. Hartley commented that Sanctuary came forward asking for additions to park and that the commission could use help with the plan. Hartley agreed with Weis to have someone qualified advising what can and cannot be done. Bouthilet confirmed that the companies are going to try to facilitate your needs regarding a particular purchase. Steele questioned how best to use the survey data. Steele noted that while Sanctuary did their homework and expressed needs; he is concerned about the unspoken needs of other neighborhoods, and suggested looking at the entire system.

Park Commission Retreat Preview (Zuleger)

Zuleger presented the park retreat agenda and prepped the commission on what to expect at the retreat. He summarized that would include talk about mission/ vision, the role of the park commission, Speak Your Peace tenants, trust, and survey results. In the afternoon they would focus on 2014 plan of work and desired outcomes for the year.

One item to discuss would be to take a look at the signature park and five regional parks (Carriage Station, Reid, Tablyn, Pebble, Demontreville), and recreational parks (VFW, Lions), and the uses of each park and connectivity. Zuleger asked the commissioners to visit and assess other regional parks in the area prior to the retreat (Walton Park in Oakdale, Central Park in Roseville, etc).

Zuleger suggested checking in with the plan of work once per quarter, which will help build the 2014 CIP. Zuleger anticipates the morning to go quickly, states the agenda had been truncated from the original. Hartley asked again about Weis's request for professional help regarding park design. Zuleger stated that with the new park maintainer we have internal expertise. Zuleger expressed that the commission set the vision/policy and staff will find the people to implement.

Steele suggested that the morning agenda for the park retreat be condensed to capture more discussion for the Plan of Work. Zuleger agreed and suggested that there will be mini retreats throughout the year to address items that weren't touched on during the larger retreat. Steele asked what the goal is – to what level of detail will be determined at this meeting? Zuleger expects a designation/classification on each type of park - utilization and purpose. Steele asks that the agenda for the park retreat include copies of the park plan, trail plan and citizen survey.

Trail Subcommittee Update

Weis updated that the committee has been working to determine a trail that best suits the city. They will be presenting different grant options/trail plans to City Administrator Zuleger, City Planner Johnson, Mayor Pearson, and Mayor Johnston on Tuesday, September 24, 2013.

Development Committee Update

Hartley said that they never received an update from staff regarding development review subcommittee. Zuleger expressed that now that the Met Council plans are determined, and development will continue, the committee will get started. The subcommittee is made up of Hartley, Steele and is in need of a new member to replace Blackford.

Acknowledge Resignation of Judith Blackford

The commission acknowledged Blackford's resignation, and announced a vacancy, leaving the commission with two open alternate positions. Zuleger stated that Blackford took the time to consider her resignation but decided it was the right choice.

Zuleger mentions the NextGen Group and the possibility to tap into the group for commission applicants. Zuleger talked about the book "Live First, Work Second," that the NextGen group is reading, and invited commissioners to read it.

Steele would like to express publicly the service of Blackford and believes she should be acknowledged for her contributions.

Meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Alyssa MacLeod, Recording Secretary