

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Park Commission Monday, October 21, 2013

Members Present: Chairperson Weis, Steele, Hartley, Hietpas, Silvernale, Ames, Nelson, Zeno (7:01)
Members Absent: Zeno
Others Present: Administrator Zuleger, SPW Bouthilet, Council Member Reeves, Taxpayer Relations & Communications Coordinator MacLeod, Planning Commission Rolf Larson

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Weis at 6:33 PM.

Approval of Agenda

Hartley suggested adding item e. under new business: Update on Mahtomedi baseball conversation

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

Installation of Park Commissioners

Approval of September 16, 2013 Minutes

M/S/P: Steele/Hietpas: Minutes approved. Approved 5-1 (Ames abstain)

Old Business

a. Sunfish Lake Park Gate Update (Bouthilet)

Bouthilet updated the Commission that the gate has been ordered and footings are scheduled to be put in on Friday. Hartley asked if the DNR would be coming out to do an assessment. Bouthilet responded that they confirmed that they would be coming but a meeting has not yet been scheduled.

b. Sanctuary Park Survey (Bouthilet)

Bouthilet provided an update that Sanctuary Park has now been surveyed and Mark is in the process of reviewing it with surveyors. Steele asked what the procedure in the case of encroachments? Bouthilet responded that it would be handled on a case by case basis.

Weis asked for a refresher on where the discussion was left regarding equipment in the park. Bouthilet responded that the only thing that was confirmed thus far is the trail. Bouthilet also informed the Commission that his contact for equipment design lost their license to AutoCAD so they are unable to assist with the plan design, and would have to utilize the Planning Department for design help. Zuleger asked the Commission if they would you like staff to hire a park planner. Hartley confirmed and stressed the importance of finding someone that can tie the two neighborhoods together. Hartley questioned how we find someone with these capabilities and if there are people that specialize in park design. Zuleger responded that the League of MN Cities has a list of resources and added that there was a person out of Roseville that was recommended and that he would check with her. Steele expressed that he would like to see park design from upper level to lower level showing the entire design as a whole. Ames asked when the lower property would be developed. Zuleger responded that the land has been purchased and that a concept plan is expected by the end of the year.

Weis asked if the park designer would include trail in the plan. Zuleger responded that the commission would need to first decide what they want and then forward that information to the designer. Weis asked what design services typically cost? Zuleger used the dog park in last community as an example, which cost around \$12k and stated that a feasibility study typically costs around \$10-12K with an engineer. Weis asked if it was possible for the Park Maintainer to complete a park design. Bouthilet said that it is beyond his scope/level.

c. Jamaca Storm Pond Planting Project (Hietpas)

Hietpas states that the project is moving forward, the first step is to submit a grant application. She discussed the contract and mentioned that some of the tasks were dependent on receiving the grant.

Zuleger asked if the funds would be coming out of the MPCA grant, and Bouthilet clarified that \$22k of grant funds are available to use as needed.

Zuleger asked for confirmation that the grant isn't for the MPCA. Hietpas clarified that the grant would be for the MN Conservation Corp to come out and do the work. Hietpas said that she would bring an updated agreement to the next meeting. Steele asked when the commission will know about the grant. Hietpas anticipated by the early part of next year.

Bouthilet suggested contacting MnDOT about excess materials from St. Croix Crossing project to use for fill. Zuleger said that the City Engineer had looked into it as well, but typically those materials are bid out with the initial contract.

Steele asked if the intention is to fill the hole or decorate. Ames stated that his preference would be to fill then decorate. Hietpas asked if there are implications with storm water. Bouthilet answered that only 1/8 of the whole area is the storm pond, which is fenced off separately, and it wouldn't be affected. He added that there would be plenty of room to fill in on the east side by the wooded parkland area, but would need to maintain grade. Ames suggested making it more gradual and natural. Steele added that by doing so, it would make the area more useful. Ames thanked Bouthilet for looking into it.

New Business

a. 2013 Park System Fall Audit (Zuleger)

Zuleger shared that in response to discussion from the last meeting, he put together a brief 2-page park audit based on examples from other cities. He talked in detail about the questions, and their significance and expressed that staff is recommending this as the template to use for the audit this fall or next spring. He asked commissioners to add or subtract as needed.

Hartley stated that she thought the audit is perfect and formatted appropriately to use with a clipboard. Zuleger asked the commission to adopt the audit, and then suggested splitting up parks.

Steele asked if they should complete the audit individually. Zuleger suggested that they work in teams of two to acquire different viewpoints from different demographics. Zuleger suggested that the commission try to complete at least the community parks this fall, and complete the neighborhood parks in the spring.

Zuleger suggested working off of one master survey – to avoid discrepancies.

Steele, Ames, Nelson, Silvernale, Hietpas, and Hartley volunteered to conduct the audits.

Ames noted that there may be subjective terminology in the survey. (ie. Outdated equipment). Zeno suggested discussing the subjective terminology. Zuleger stated that the questions were borrowed from other surveys.

M/S/P: Hartley/Ames: approve 2013 Park System fall audit. 7-0

b. 2014 Park Commission Plan of Work – Draft (Zuleger)

Zuleger turned the discussion over to Reeves to discuss the park retreat summary, and thanked Reeves for his work.

Reeves discussed the summary which was written as a series of key outcomes. He included narrative for each discussion talking about what the group did and included no names or individual quotes. Reeves clarified that some issues that are relevant to building trust with the council. Steele asked the commissioners how they would prefer to frame this back to council, as council has not yet seen the summary.

Reeves stated that the session 5 of the park retreat did a good job both in building on what was done before and setting the commission up well for 2014.

Steele pointed out that trails were found to be important but were not listed in the primary work components in the summary. Zuleger mentioned that he had noticed while going through the notes from the retreat that trails were talked about a lot but weren't necessarily reflected on the Plan of Work.

To track progress, Zuleger stated that staff would create a color coded balanced scorecard and provide the commission with monthly updates.

Hartley mentioned that if the commission could complete the items on the Plan of Work it would be the most productive year of her time. Zuleger mentioned that City Staff would complete about 80% of their Plan of Work.

Zuleger changed topics from trust to funding and commended the commission for getting so much done.

Bouthilet expressed that Lake Elmo Baseball team put in a request for backstop and fence improvements for VFW field, which does need it. Cost would be estimated at \$18,100. Zuleger asked how much they would be kicking in. Bouthilet said none. Weis asked about putting this item on next month's agenda. Hartley pointed out that the CIP needed to be approved and asked if that would be done next month. Zuleger answered that the park commission CIP is being handled like a traditional plan but the commission spends things as needed and has the park funds to spend. He added that if the commission approved the CIP, it could be presented to council at their next meeting.

Steele questioned the \$100k cost for Sanctuary Park. Bouthilet mentioned that a lot of the cost goes toward trail in addition to difficult topography, and a pipeline going through that area. Steele expressed concerned about priorities: that maintenance of city parks is a problem, but new parks are continually developed. Steele expressed that he thought the commission could make a much bigger impact next year by putting more money toward improving parks already exist. Zuleger suggested that the audit may help determine priorities. Steele responded that his top priority would be to address the dumpy parks; to spruce them up and get them up to date.

Steele expressed concerned that they are putting the largest amount of money toward new parks. Zuleger said that Sanctuary came forward a long time ago with a request for a park, and the commission is now playing catch up. Steele suggested investing just enough to focus on the main priority, which is equipment as indicated in the survey. \$30-\$40k should get a separate swing set.

Larson suggested the allotment of funds over a 3 to 4 year period, instead of spending \$100K at once. Larson added that the commission should start with something that is going to make a difference to the people that use the park and then build onto it – allowing a chance to evaluate how successful that choice was, and then evaluate need for trails after that.

Ames said that he thinks it prudent to postpone approving funding until the audit is complete. Zuleger confirmed that they would hold off approving the funds until the audit was complete.

Reeves asked the commission to consider adopting a new mission statement. Weis read the suggested mission statement out loud. Ames expressed approval and that it strikes the right tone around parks and rec: it implies recreational uses but does not include programming. Steele added that it was very well written and straight to the point.

M/S/P: Ames/Steele: Adopt new mission statement 7-0

Hietpas asked if they need to stick to the dollar amount or if they can add any items. Steele asked to add in ADA things.

c. Creation of Sunfish Lake Park Task Force/City Council Update (Zuleger)

Zuleger stated that they brought the Sunfish Lake Park name change to council and thanked Hartley and Hietpas for attending the meeting. Zuleger stated that the Mayor had sensed a lack of support from council so he postponed further discussion. Zuleger told the council that the commission would be putting together a Sunfish task force and would prepare a recommendation prior to addressing the issue again at Council.

Ames suggested utilizing Speak Your Peace and schedule a working session around this item with council to clear up the disconnect in vision between council and commission. He added that sometimes it feels as though the council does not support the actions of the commission.

Zuleger expressed that there was a desire by at least three council members to increase utilization and explore more active recreation use in that park. He added that Councilmember Smith remembers an agreement with commission to put small center and rink in the park, and stated that the council would like a better understanding about what falls under the scope of what the land trust allows. Zuleger said he will work with the land trust to get better definition of the appropriate activities. Steele requested examples of active things that have been allowed. Zuleger responded dog parks and sport fields.

Ames mentioned that with due respect to Smith there was never agreement to put in hockey rink (boards). Hietpas didn't recall Smith stating that she wanted a hockey rink added, but something added; she and Zuleger clarified that the intent was for a recreational rink. Steele suggested going back and finding that discussion in the meeting minutes. Ames pointed out regarding the potential investment in hockey rinks that the City already has lighted facility can be expanded and is easy to get to (Lions). Steele suggested the possibility of adding a nature center.

Weis asked for volunteers to serve on the Sunfish Lake task force. Ames and Hietpas volunteered. Hietpas asked for a copy of the land trust document. Steele asked to have a copy sent to everyone. Zuleger said he would send it and that one of the first tasks for the force will be to meet the land trust. Zuleger added that if it is decided to expand beyond definition of passive, an amendment to land trust will be required. Reeves stated that he believes that the term preserve does not exclude active use, and that the definition of nature preserve, implies the preservation the natural state of the area. Reeves added that the term preserve says we are committed to preserving that part of the land, but can also promote other active uses to use other space that is there, and can fully utilize the parks while preserving the land at the same time. Hietpas thanked Reeves for his clarification. Steele confirmed that it would help to move conversation forward if terms were fully understood.

Steele asked how many people are currently using the park, and how many more are needed to meet council's idea of increased utilization. Zuleger suggested doing a utilization survey to find out. Zuleger added that there have been several instances of inappropriate usage of parks, and suggested that increasing usage would deter the illegal activity. Zuleger further expressed that he has spent time in the park at least 10 or 12 times and wonders why more people don't use it. He asked how we can get people to realize what gem it is.

Ames said that he was hiking there today, and didn't see anyone but that doesn't mean no one else was there. Steele added that when he goes he usually sees 3 to 4 cars in the parking lot.

Hartley expressed that she felt there was hostility from at least one city council member who wanted to end agreement with land trust and said that they need to be open to discussion with them about something that will enhance the park in an appropriate manner. Larson mentioned that he served on the commission when the Sunfish issue originally arose. He mentioned that he thought to increase usage they would need to do continuous maintenance of landscape and take care of Invasive species.

Weis appointed Nelson, Steele, Hietpas, and Ames as task force.

d. Discussion on Park Placement in SE Quadrant of City/Partnership with Stillwater School District (Zulger)

The park commission received a specific request from planners. Two subdivisions will be developed in the SE quadrant of the City: Pratt Homes Senior twin homes and 50 homes by Rylund homes. Because the surround area is zoned commercial, they are proposing a partner with Oak-Land Junior High and school district on utilizing some of their green space to move and expand the neighborhood park that would serve the new developments and Cimarron residents.

Hartley asked how far the park land is from the Ryland Development. Zuleger answered about a mile. Hartley also asked if there will be trails going through? Zuleger responded that there would be – that they working with county when they repave HWY 5 to get bike lane, and trail connections. Zuleger asked the commissioners to drive by the school and take a look at the area.

Ames asked if the park assets would literally go on the school's land. Zuleger said they would be talking about the land in the back. Ames asked if the trail would be set up so kids from Cimarron could commute on it. Zuleger said 5th street trail will have sidewalk and multi-use. Nelson added that he thinks there is probably an informal trail between the school and Cimarron.

DZ mentions that they are working to get a new building to hold the after school program run by FamilyMeans. Zuleger expressed that it doesn't make sense to double up have the school spend money on things, and then us spend money on the same things. Ames asked where the Cal Ripken baseball thing will go. Zuleger responded that there had been some discussion about baseball facility to be shared with West Lakeland. Hartley stated that she thinks the idea sounds great. Zuleger reiterated that it makes sense to share resources with schools. Drive by we will talk about it more at next meeting. Zeno asked if it would all be on school land or if they would acquire land. Zuleger responded that there is a possibility of picking up some land in the area.

e. Update on Mahtomedi Baseball (Hartley)

Hartley received a call from Paul Miller with Mahtomedi Baseball who wanted to give the commission update how the summer went with baseball leagues. They had more than 500 kids enrolled in 12 week program. Practices occurred Monday through Thursday evening. They weeded Demontreville four times over summer and raked the field after every evening. Hartley said that they wanted to express how much they appreciate the use of the park. Ames said he was glad to see the park being used.

Staff Report and Updates

a. Park Promotion and Awareness (MacLeod)

In response to the need to market parks and raise awareness, MacLeod is developing a marketing plan for the parks. It will include building a seasonal photo library of park space, a web audit and update, and article in The Source, and a 18-week promotional initiative through *Fresh*. Also included is the planning of specific events in parks to celebrate accomplishments and engage taxpayers in the parks.

b. Maintenance

Bouthilet gave an update on the mitigation hunt. Eight residents have been selected to participate. A pre-hunt meeting will be held on Oct. 22nd. Hunt is still scheduled for the second weekend in November.

Weis asked if there had been any more discussion on logging? Bouthilet responded that they were looking at maintenance harvesting. He said the whole foresting area needs to be trimmed out. Hietpas asked if there was any plan in place. Bouthilet answered that they will take look at it and they anticipate that they will need a private forester. Bouthilet talked to one candidate who knows Kathy Widen.

Ames returned to the hunt conversation asking if the access points will be marked prior to hunt. Bouthilet stated that he would be posting signs that coming weekend.

Trail Subcommittee Update

a. Bike trail feasibility RFP (Weis)

Weis informed the commission that the next step in the trail plan was to hire a firm to do a feasibility report. Initial figures were \$12k for a feasibility study on property. The City Planner is also looking into internal land acquisition. A lot of what the committee is doing at this point is to find a route that makes sense financially and location wise.

Zuleger said that Planner Johnson will take the trail plan that the committee developed and conduct an assessment to see how much of an impact it would have on private property and what kind of right of way the City would need to acquire. Johnson is assessing how much of an impact it has on private property. The information will be given to City Engineer Griffin who will conduct a feasibility study to look at details including grading issues. The study will most likely be farmed out to AES or SHE, the organizations that do a lot of trail work in the City's engineering pool. Anticipated cost for the feasibility study would be 8-12k. Zuleger mentioned that they are getting ready for new train that UP is putting in and there is concern about speed in that area. The priority is to get the comp plan done in front of met council. Looks like numbers will come down. Johnson's deadline is to get it through in November.

They are looking at safety issues – near the railroad guardrails may not cut it. Hartley spoke to a representative from the Bike alliance who said they put in split rail fences and expressed that it would look nicer than guardrail. Zuleger said for affordability sake many communities put in post and wire.

Weis asked if a formal motion to approve RFP is needed. Zuleger asked the commissioners to hold off and allow them to go with the pool of engineers approved by the city. Zuleger suggested meeting with the trail committee to discuss the scope. Zuleger also mentioned that the county is currently taking a look at the Klondike access (trail that goes through the middle of LE Park Reserve). Zuleger said that the county is considering putting in a box culvert. Zeno pointed out that Klondike has steep grade going both ways, and mentioned if he were biking, he wouldn't use the trail; he would stick to the shoulder.

Weis asked about the need to make a motion for a not to exceed amount. Zuleger said that the trail committee could be involved in the decision, but that Griffin would be able to suggest a qualified candidate.

Zuleger mentioned that there seems to be a bit of hesitancy by the county to allow the trail into the Lake Elmo Park Reserve. Zuleger stated that at next meeting, hopefully we will have chosen someone to do that. DZ: next thing is to look at more funding options; he said that one of the major healthcare device players is looking at coming in.

M/S/P: Weis/Hartley: Approve RFP not to exceed \$12,000 for feasibility study on proposed LERT 7-0

b. Bike Trail Community Outreach/Input Meeting (Weis)

Weis stated that the commission is striving for community input. He asked if it is too early to conduct a community outreach meeting. Ames responded that he likes the idea of community involvement. He wants to make sure that the plans are far enough along to give the public something realistic to react to.

Hietpas said that she talked to one community member that said she would like to have input and share ideas. She believes that involving the public should come earlier in the game.

Weis and Hartley discussed asking people to come to the trail meeting or talk to the subcommittee member to add input. Zuleger adds that the information can be included in Fresh, on the web and FB. Zuleger also suggests asking the NextGen Group for input.

c. Bike Trail Grant Application Approval (Weis)

Weis questioned if to officially request grant funds you had to prove that you are on a commission. Zuleger asked for an official motion for staff to spend time to research grant options. Zuleger already alerted Met Council that the city will be asking Washington County to approve the LERT as east-west connection. Zuleger stated that in order to get assistance from the Met Council the request needs to come from Washington County, but Lake Elmo is uniquely positioned with mayor Johnston currently serving as chair of Met Council's

Open Space and Park Commission. Zuleger asked the park commission to go on record to assign staff to look for applicable grants on this project.

Zuleger suggested that as soon as the feasibility study is complete that the commission should bring it to Washington County Parks Commission and ask them to go to Met Council for the grant and request the entire thing.

M/S/P: Hartley/Hietpas: Recommends city staff to research grant options for LERT 7-0

d. Swearing in of Mike Zeno

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Alyssa MacLeod, Recording Secretary