



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation
Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, June 12, 2024**

Members Present: Commissioner Dave Anderson, Commissioner Mike Niziolek, Commissioner Jill Varty, Commissioner Joy Goodwin, Commissioner Greg Loidolt, Commissioner Hal Stewart

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Manager Joe Stremcha and Senior Administrative Assistant Dawn Larson

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 06:30 PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to approve the agenda. Motion 6-0.

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

4.1 Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Varty and seconded by Commissioner Stewart to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports and with the change of the incorrect last name of Churchill to Burchill in the minutes. Motion 6-0.

5. OPEN FORUM

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1 Just for Kix Walkathon

Karissa Leistico 716 Freeport Ave, Elk River, MN spoke on behalf of the Just for Kix Walkathon. Mrs. Leistico owns the Just for Kix program in Elk River. Her students were asked to attend the weeklong Reli Aquest Bowl, a college football game in Tampa Florida. Tickets are \$2400 and flights are \$500. The girls must fundraise 100% of their way. They get to perform for the half time show for about 60,000. They get to also go to many other awesome fun features of Florida during the week they are there.

The walkathon will be from 9am to 1pm at Woodland Trails Regional Park on the main paved loop, so not a 5k exactly. This is the first time they have ever fundraised anything. Commissioner Goodwin asked how many kids they are fundraising for. Mrs. Leistico said there are fifteen kids from second

grade to twelfth grade going this year.

They started fundraising in May and most girls have raised 1,000 which is halfway to their goal. Parent volunteers will guide instead of signs. Chair Anderson said paint is not good, but chalk is okay.

Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Loidolt to approve the Just for Kix Walkathon at Woodland Trails Regional Park on Saturday, July 13, 2024. Motion carried 6-0

6.2 Hillside Beginner's Trail

Derek Burchill, 14481 Iodine Street NW in Ramsey, is the MORC (Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists) trail steward for Hillside Park. He passed out a packet with more details about the project including budget and a sketch. He reviewed the information he provided in the packet. He identified a blue square where a permanent restroom, a water fountain and bike wash station could go. The green rectangles represent more picnic tables including one already there. The orange circles are boulders. He also expressed that a smaller shade structure would be suitable versus a large picnic structure sitting not enough room.

Chair Anderson thanked Mr. Burchill for the detail. Commissioner Goodwin asked how much additional upkeep and maintenance the new trail would need. Mr. Burchill said that they would just absorb the maintenance into their existing plan. Chair Anderson confirmed with Mr. Stremcha that there is plenty of black dirt and staff can haul it out for them. Mr. Burchill prefers that the city supplied the lumber, so MORC does not have to take the money out of their budget for other trail maintenance.

Mr. Stremcha said there is lumber left over from an abandoned project at Woodland Trails Regional Park for a dock and nature play area. Chair Anderson said there is a lot of two by tens he saw.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if the parking lot design is flexible. Mr. Stremcha said the design for the parking lot is not set but the container for the parking lot is set up for about thirty stalls. Mr. Burchill said there are typically fifteen cars in the parking lot but can have up to twenty-seven on a busy night if they are the only park with trails open. Commissioner Niziolek asked if there would have to be a storm drainage for the parking lot. Mr. Stremcha said potentially. Commissioner Stewart said that the black dirt would help with the buildup since some of the flat areas are low in the potential trail area.

Mr. Burchill said the goal is to get the trail done by the start of school but he needs more volunteers. Once he posts on social media that the project is a go, he imagines more people will step up to volunteer. Commissioner Goodwin asked how the city could support Mr. Burchill in gaining more volunteers. Secretary Larson said that Mr. Burchill can contact Karen Wingard, the volunteer coordinator for the City of Elk River about how to advertise for the need of volunteers. Some options would be to add posts on our Facebook page and add posters in the kiosk.

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Varty to approve the Hillside Beginners Trail construction along with the donation from the City of Elk River for black dirt and lumber on hand given to Hillside for construction. Motion carried 6-0

6.3 Park Dedication - Briggs Estates

Mr. Stremcha presented his report. Staff reviewed the park master plan to see if there were any trail easement conflicts and there were not. Chair Anderson said the math did not add up but that since it

was just for one dwelling unit, it would be fine.

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Varty to approve park dedication to be paid in cash, at the applicable rate of one residential dwelling unit. Motion carried 6-0

6.4 Scout Island Park

Mr. Stremcha presented his report.

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Stewart to approve the recommendation to City Council that parcel: 75-00132-2125 be recognized as an open space /undeveloped park and named "Scout Island Park". Motion carried 6-0

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1 Disc Golf Course Open House Recap

Mr. Stremcha presented his report. He is looking for feedback from the commission to provide the next steps for the new Parks and Recreation Manager to continue leading this project.

Chair Anderson shared that the goal is to whittle down the list of potential parks and come back to the commission in August. Upon reviewing the list of parks provided, he noticed the Meadowvale Heights Park is missing and that he did not remember talking about Ridgewood East.

Katie Ellsworth, 194 76 Tyler St. NW Elk River, asked if the commission reviewed the feedback provided after the open house discussion. Chair Anderson confirmed that they did and that the goals now are to whittle down the sites, tour the remaining sites, meet with the interest groups, and proceed with development plans including budget and course layout.

Mr. Stremcha shared that it is a priority to get something developed in 2025.

Tim Johnson, 1860 Meadowvale #2 NW Elk River, shared that he has played disc golf for 14 years and now plays professionally. He shared that it can be a great asset for ins and outs and safety measures but had not been able to make it to the previous meeting. He said disc golf can take a dead park, liven it up, and make it safer. He referenced Montissippi Disc Golf Park in Monticello and the turnaround that has happened there since they added it. He added that now the park is busy with families, tournaments, and leagues.

Chair Anderson said that this is a community that will rely heavily on the user group to be involved in the site selection, design development and ongoing maintenance of a disc golf course to lighten the load for city staff.

Commissioner Loidolt mentioned that bringing Tim Johnson out to the parks could be beneficial.

Ms. Ellsworth said she visited 5 parks and of those she requested special attention be given to Camp Cozy and Meadowvale Heights. She shared that Camp Cozy is wide open which would be easier to set up and navigate an 18-hole course. She shared that Meadowvale Heights would have safety concerns with the walking path and need a more experienced designer than herself. She also felt that most of the other locations would not be large enough to have an 18-hole golf course.

Chair Anderson mentioned that Ridgewood East must have been a typo as no one can remember that

park being on the list. He requested that it be removed from the list.

Chair Anderson mentioned that Camp Cozy was recently approved for prairie restoration through the Friends of the Mississippi grant application and Camp Cozy natural resources management plan. Commissioner Goodwin questioned if there could be exploration of Camp Cozy still with the plan that just went through.

Commissioner Niziolek commented that Meadowvale Heights could still be an option. Mr. Stremcha said they would narrow the list of parks down before the new person starts in July to less than half of what is on the list. Ms. Ellsworth said that the user group visited several parks to Camp Cozy and Meadowvale Heights, but Meadowvale has a lot of people to work around.

Chair Anderson suggested the removal of Birch, Sedge Meadow, Alba Ridge from the list. Also, Camp Cozy is not an option due to grants which leaves Meadowvale Heights.

Russ Langer, 7830 Padgett Ave. NE Otsego, requested that Camp Cozy still be considered as a potential course, but Chair Anderson said that the topography was not varied enough for what he thought the users were looking for.

The Commissioners reviewed the park list to confirm the numbers of the parks and whether they matched or not.

Chair Anderson requested that the discussion be brought back in July.

8. ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Chair Anderson asked for an expansion of the pedestrian gate installation at the PT Complex. Mr. Stremcha said the pedestrian gates will replace the drive-through gates at two of the locations to prevent driving damage on the fields but allow safe access into and out of the fields for pedestrians.

Mr. Stremcha shared that two candidates are being interviewed on Monday by the City Council for the commission vacancy.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn the regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 7:27 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

11. WORK SESSION – UPPER TOWN CONFERENCE ROOM

The work session meeting of the Elk River Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 7:35pm by Chair Anderson.

Commissioner Loidolt departed at 7:27pm before the work session.

11.1 Great Northern Trail Amenities Grant Opportunity

Mr. Stremcha presented his report and reviewed options for shade structures and a bike repair station that were discussed as potential alternative options at the previous meeting. Chair Anderson asked to review the slides and budget that Mrs. Hugo provided at the previous commission meeting. Mr. Stremcha pulled up the slideshow and the commission went slide by slide as the commission discussed

changes they would like to make.

Feature one included a trailhead sign at Meadowvale that the commission viewed as very expensive. Chair Anderson said that most people do not enter the GNT at this location but enter via the parking lot of Meadowvale Elementary School.

The Commissioners did not think that two trailhead signs were necessary and that the funds could be used elsewhere.

Commissioner Niziolek does not believe this is the best location for the trailhead without making sure there is adequate parking. Commissioner Niziolek said that there should be a discussion with ISD 728 about the parking lot at Meadowvale Elementary as an alternative. Commissioner Goodwin and Commissioner Varty said that there will not always be available parking in that lot, especially during the school year.

Commissioner Varty said that there can be up to thirty cars parked there and with the school being as busy as it is at drop-off and pick-up school times it can be very congested. Commissioner Goodwin said that while this is where the trail starts Woodland Trails Regional Park is a better place due to the larger parking lot and it is a beautiful park that can biked through. Commissioner Varty asked if there is a way to do a smaller sign here and maybe a larger sign later.

Mark Rathbun, 19451 Zumbro Court NW Elk River, spoke and said that many people park at Meadowvale Elementary and there are many cars with car racks and even trailers. He thinks using Woodland Trails to get to the GNT can be confusing due to the winding trails and there would need to be better signage to get from the parking lot to the trail. He also suggested that signage and drinking water amenities there would be good at the Meadowvale School location. He also suggested that bike fix it stations in good public viewing areas such as Woodland Trails and Meadowvale Elementary.

Commissioner Niziolek suggested the need for a discussion with the school for options to park in their parking lot or to add a small lot off Upland on the land that is presently for sale. Commissioner Niziolek said the parking issue must be addressed before this location is officially the trail head. He added that there needs to be grade separation in all of Elk River especially for the Great Northern Trail.

Jim Svenson, 19291 Proctor Rd. Elk River, shared he and his wife and another couple ride Minnesota Trails and every year they ride the Elk River trail and if it is school time they will not meet at Meadowvale. They ride with a lot of people, up to 40 to 45 people, and if it is not summertime many people up to 30 or 35 cars are parked at Meadowvale, so they need to clear something with the school during the school year. He parks at Woodland Trails during the school year and Meadowvale during the summer.

Chair Anderson said he feels they are trying to cram a year's worth of meetings in just one or two meetings. Mr. Stremcha reiterated that more changes and amenities can be added in the future.

Commissioner Stewart said he thinks there needs to at least be some sort of small sign identifying the trail head so people from out of town know where the trail begins. He said he also thought that this project also had the goal of drawing people to the City of Elk River, so signage must be included to help guide non familiar people with the trail head and where to park.

Chair Anderson asked what the total amount of the commitment by Elk River is and reviewed the individual categories of commitment. Mr. Stremcha confirmed it is \$133,000. Whatever changes they

decide at this meeting could affect the total by increasing or reducing the total. Secretary Larson pointed out that if a smaller sign were wanted for the main trail point that could be done in house and the bulk of grant funds for signage.

Commissioner Goodwin pointed out that the commission does not have the timeline to make all the things happen at this location before this grant.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he would spend the grant money on the lot of land near Upland to buy for parking. Chair Anderson and Commissioner Niziolek would like staff to investigate the possibility of purchasing this land. Commissioner Stewart pointed out that he did not think that the grant would be able to include the purchase of this lot.

Chair Anderson summarized that the Commission suggested a bike fix it station, a smaller sign at main location, and water accessibility at the Meadowvale access.

Commissioner Niziolek said he would put all the money into developing the access point to the Great Northern Trail at Meadowvale or Upland or discuss a partnership with the school district. Mr. Stremcha explained that the timing of the grant and the possible purchase of land at this time does not match up. This could be a consideration for the future as a capital outlay project.

Mr. Stremcha also pointed out that there are long term goals and short-term goals here and a long-term goal could even include options like Oak Knoll. Commissioner Niziolek agreed.

Chair Anderson suggested spending \$3,000 at Woodland Trails and \$130,000 at Meadowvale including two bikes fix it stations, an in-house sign, water, and parking. Commissioner Goodwin left at 8:25pm.

Mr. Stremcha handed out a photo attachment. The commission and attendees, including Jim Swenson, feel that benches would be a priority versus picnic tables. There would ideally be four benches. Mr. Stremcha shared that the average bench cost is \$2800-\$3200 each.

Stremcha itemized the list of what the commission would like and the funding amount allocations.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he does not feel the gate limiters will not be needed as much in the future now that e-bikes are becoming so popular. Chair Anderson does think the gate limiters have value. The Commissioners suggested having a park bench including one by Watson, the 221 St parking lot, at Woodland Trails Regional Park by the biathlon range, and one at the trail head.

The limiters help keep motorized vehicles out so at least one would be necessary Chair Anderson said. Feature 3, 4 had gate limiters in the initial presentation but they do not feel those ones are needed. The Commission does not feel a shade structure is needed if there are benches since there are so many shady spots on the trail.

11.2 PT Complex Welcome Plaza

Mr. Stremcha presented his report and the photo handout. Mr. Stremcha said he is looking for confirmation from the commission that they are on the right track for design from HKGi for the welcome plaza that was included in the sponsorship package. Chair Anderson and Councilmember Beyer asked about foul ball issues. Chair Anderson said those issues could be solved by shifting the design east or west if necessary.

Mr. Stremcha said that the goal is overall to improve safety with this welcome plaza surrounding the raised pedestrian crossing. In the future, trees and other decorative items provided by the sponsor, including a potential pergola, could be on and around the four concrete comers of the plaza on the trail's sides.

12. MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business, moved by Commissioner Varty and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to adjourn the Parks and Recreation Commission work session at 9:04 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.



Dave Anderson, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk