Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, July 10, 2024

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, Parks and Recreation Manager Jeff Shelby, Recreation Sports Coordinator Warren Ellingworth, and Recreation Assistant Ali Wallace

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 7-0.

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

   4.1 06-12-2024 Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes

   Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Varty to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports. Motion 7-0.

5. OPEN FORUM

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

   6.1 Athletic Facilities Master Plan

   Mr. Stremcha presented the report. Going forward it would be helpful to schedule work sessions to discuss the plan more in depth. If it is possible, we can start meetings earlier or else we will need longer nights to discuss each of the locations. Mr. Stremcha shared there was a typo on page 11 of the master plan. It should state five rectangular fields will be added at the PT Complex instead of three. The plan outlines the facilities that will be improved upon over the 10-year period. It is up to the Commission to identify those priorities and weigh out the timeline for implementation.

   Chair Anderson thinks there needs to be an overall presentation at the next meeting. Mr. Stremcha suggested having a work session earlier at 5:30 or 6:00 and then the regular meeting after the work session to accommodate for staff and HKGi. Commissioners discussed and agreed on starting at 6:00 p.m. for the 90-minute work session before starting the regular meeting.

Commissioner Fermoyle asked for clarification regarding the time change, will it only be for the next meeting or for all meetings moving forward. Mr. Stremcha shared it will for sure be for the August meeting and depending on how far we get at that meeting, we will reassess for September and October.

Commissioner Niziolek would like a clearly identified payment structure associated with improvements and years associated with it. It needs to be carefully planned out. Mr. Stremcha said we can work on that.

Commissioner Loidolt wants to make sure that changes can be made to plans before the ground is broken if things are not perceived right. Mr. Stremcha said at this stage we are talking about conceptual plans for the improvements, once we get into the bidding process that is when we get more in depth of the commitment stage.

Commissioner Fermoyle asked if there is any history, they need to be made aware of or be educated on before moving forward since she is a new commission member. Mr. Stremcha shared he will get her caught up offline on past conversations. Chair Anderson shared there had been a committee of stake holders that participated in some of the development of the plan, but none of the original members are left.

Commissioner Goodwin asked if this is the plan that we are for sure moving forward with. Mr. Stremcha shared that nothing is definitive at this point. This is the project in the scope of addressing the follow up concerns from the HKGi study regarding the number of fields and the long-term useability. The Master Plan tries to identify those areas of concerns and then it is up to the Commission to prioritize that we agree, and this is the sequence, and are we going to build a $2 million dollar field or build a $1.5 million dollar field.

Councilmember Beyer shared there was a company that was hired to do the plan. It is the Commission's responsibility to make a good recommendation to the City Council.

Chair Anderson would like to change the name to Athletic Facilities Concept Plan instead of Master Plan. He feels the plan is going to change many times and it is easier to change a concept plan over a master plan. Councilmember Beyer agrees because the perception out in the community is that this is a plan, and we are already moving forward and thinks Concept Plan is a good recommendation.

Chair Anderson shared that the Commission is a recommending body; we do not make any decisions we make recommendations to the City Council for their approval, or they can change it. He shared he is concerned about the potential cost and how we will pay for it. Once we have the concept and get to the implementation then we have an opportunity to weigh in on the funding options.

Mr. Stremcha shared there is not the cash capital available to do these projects outright. The three phases would be constructed through bond issuance process. Chair Anderson shared a bonding scheme, referendum, sales tax, or pay as you go are all options and the Commission can make recommendations.

Chair Anderson asked Mr. Ellingworth if he would like to share how important this is and his involvement in the process.

Mr. Ellingworth shared that the youth associations are very excited to have this concept plan in place. The data was gathered from surveys that were taken by the youth sports associations. They had a high participation rate because the associations are very passionate about getting their people involved so their voices can be heard. This plan reflects the majority of what they are asking and looking for. Long term, we do not have enough fields to let them rest and allow the grass to grow back so they are in good quality playing condition. Adding more rectangular fields will be vital to the associations and the community. Looking at other changes, the Dave Anderson Athletic Complex is a great location that is used for internal programming, such as soccer and youth baseball. At the Oak Knoll Athletic Complex, it would be beneficial to move the rectangular fields to the Plants and Things Recreation Complex so they are all in one spot, and then make Oak Knoll a baseball/softball complex. Adding a miracle field would be an awesome opportunity for individuals with disabilities. The addition of soccer/football/lacrosse fields at the PT Complex would provide associations their own home space. Fields 1-4 can be used for baseball and softball, fields 5 and 6 are only for baseball. The addition of four fields near the windmill would add more fields for softball and younger baseball. One of the biggest points of feedback we received from the associations is they really liked having a home space and designated spot they can play without being split up, especially for tournaments. We have a lot of local tournaments, but we are getting more requests to do tournaments from associations outside of Elk River. This project would be very important to the community because it has the impact to bring more people to the city if we can have more tournaments. He stated he receives compliments and emails from people that have attended tournaments so if we can continue to use this as our building block, Elk River would be very fortunate to have something like that and he believes the community, overall, would support that. This concept addressed the majority of what the associations are asking for. The biggest thing for two of the largest organizations, baseball, and softball, is they like the concept of having eight fields in one location for tournaments, which will allow them to have longer tournaments with more teams, which brings more people into the community. He shared the outline of the project is over ten years, and he thinks this would address the needs of the community and allow us to rest the fields. Our Parks Maintenance staff takes a lot of pride in taking care of the facilities and he knows that will continue.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if we have specific numbers that shows how many people that go to Plants and Things Recreation Complex then make it into downtown Elk River. Mr. Stremcha shared our Economic Development Authority has data from Placer Ai and we can ask them to provide that. He shared that he has referenced it when utilizing it as a sponsorship incentive to reiterate this is the economic impact, we have in the area based on the user experience and cell phone data.

Councilmember Beyer shared it is a very powerful tool and we were able to see the top spots that people went to before and after the section hockey games, which had thousands of people.

Mr. Ellingworth shared people are staying at the fields longer and spending their money at the concession stand, which supports the youth organizations which they put the money right back into renting fields and field house, so it is a win, win. They may not go to a local restaurant, but they are supporting local youth organizations, which circulates back through the city.
Commissioner Stewart asked if there are any projections for concession sales based on this plan and how it would impact our concession ability. Mr. Stremcha said we have considered ways of having concessions run through the city, but not in the immediate future. We have had vague brainstorming discussions on the subject, but we are going to give the concessions operations at the FT Center an opportunity to get stabilized before we travel down those broader, long-term possibilities.

Commissioner Loidolt said if the concessions are not run through the organizations, it will take away a significant amount of money from them, which makes the user fees go up. Mr. Stremcha shared that the City could stock it and then staff it through them with volunteers being compensated, essentially contracted concession stand hours. They would still provide the volunteers and work it but with a consistent product and menu available. This was a very entry level conversation, and we recognize that the user groups have a vested interest in the concession stand.

Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Fermoyle to change the time for the August 14, 2024, Commission meeting to 6:00 p.m. to accommodate for the work session for the Athletic Fields Master Plan with the regular meeting starting 1.5 hours after the work session begins. Motion carried 7-0

6.2 Rivers Edge Commons Seating

Mr. Stremcha shared the staff report regarding the seating which is eroding due to the drainage at the park. The City Council did make it clear that we would not leverage the Park Improvement or Park Dedication Funds. There are some alternative funding sources that can be leveraged for a project of this scope and the Council will continue those conversations. Councilmember Beyer shared the Council sees the value of this to continue and that is why they asked that it come back to the Commission to get pricing. Mr. Stremcha shared if the Commission has potential concerns and would like to offer that input, now would be a perfect time before the scope of work is developed.

Chair Anderson shared drainage or not, if we put limestone back on the hill it will erode again. Mr. Stremcha shared that City Council's consensus is to use concrete.

Commissioner Niziolek asked how long the park could potentially be closed. Mr. Stremcha shared it depends on the Spring season, and it could be until May because it takes time for the turf to be reestablished. The goal is to have it open by the first concert in June. Councilmember Beyer asked if could be open for the Memorial Day program and Mr. Stremcha said we will shoot for that, but it is all weather dependent for these projects. Commissioner Niziolek asked if we have a picture of the concrete design. Mr. Stremcha said we do not have one at this stage, but he thinks Champlin has a similar design with concrete and grass.

Commissioner Goodwin confirmed the functionality will be like what we have now, just not limestone and Mr. Stremcha confirmed that is correct.

6.3 Disc Golf

Mr. Stremcha presented the staff report. Camp Cozy was discussed as a potential site, but disc golf is not a compatible amenity. The parks that have potential sites are Meadowvale Heights Park and Burr Oak Park. Any items or inclusions of amenities for those locations would be great opportunity to discuss at a site tour.

Commissioner Niziolek suggested having a natural resource inventory before we look at Burr Oak and make sure the natural resource elements might be negatively impacted by foot traffic. There are some indications that some plant communities are worth looking at. Chair Anderson asked who could make that assessment and Commissioner Niziolek said he could seek individuals that could look at that, but he is not sure if staff has any recommendations. Mr. Stremcha said if he has any referrals staff can take that into advisement.

Chair Anderson thinks the Fall would be a better time for a tour, instead of July or August. Mr. Stremcha asked if there are suggestions for a date and time to tour both parks.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if the natural resource inventory before the tour. Chair Anderson said you would do the inventory after the tour if Burr Oak were going to be the location. There is no sense in doing the inventory if Burr Oak is not an option.

Commissioner Goodwin asked for clarification about the inventory. Chair Anderson said it is about possibly destroying a natural resource.

Commissioners agreed to have the park tours on Tuesday, September 10 at 6:00pm.

Commissioner Niziolek asked about parking at Oak Burr and Mr. Stremcha said those specific concerns will be discussed during the tour of the facilities.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1 GNRT Grant Application

Mr. Shelby shared the staff report. Gina Hugo, Sherburne County Parks Director, shared what the Great Northern Trail partnership is about and the revised proposal. She went over each of the features that the Commission agreed upon at the work session on June 12, 2024. The first feature which is on the south end near Meadowvale Elementary is a bike repair station with a concrete pad. Feature two is a bike repair station and bench with concrete pad in Woodland Trails Regional Park, potentially located near the park kiosk. Feature three is located at County Road 33 & Watson which would include a restroom screen by the portable toilet with a concrete pad and a bench with a concrete pad. Feature four is at 221st Ave parking lot, would include a trailhead sign with map and information, Hi-viz ADA width limiter gates, and a bench with a concrete pad along the trail.
The total out of pocket would be $31,973.33 for the Elk River Project Components. The partnership asks for a recommendation for a resolution of support which is required from all the participating partners of the grant for the proposal.

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to recommend to City Council to approve the Great Northern Trail grant application as presented. Motion carried 7-0

8. PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE

8.1 Parks and Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his staff report.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Commissioner Fermoyle and seconded by Commissioner Varty to adjourn the regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 7:45 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Dave Anderson, Chair

Tina Allard, City Clerk