



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation
Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, August 14, 2024**

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Manager Joe Stremcha, Parks and Recreation Manager Jeff Shelby, and Senior Administrative Assistant Dawn Larson, Recreation Coordinator Warren Ellingworth, Recreation Intern Lauren O'Neil

I. CALL SPECIAL WORK SESSION TO ORDER

I.1 Special Meeting Work Session Notice

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 06:00 PM.

2. SPECIAL WORK SESSION DISCUSSION ITEMS

2.1 Athletic Facilities Master Plan

Paul Paige, President of HKGi was in attendance to review the plan and answer questions.

Before diving into the details of the plan, Chair Anderson, and Commissioner Niziolek asked to discuss changing the name of the plan to get away from using the words "master plan." Mr. Paige suggested using the word framework instead of master.

Commissioner Niziolek attempted to make a motion to change the name to Facilities framework concept plan. He was cut off and it was discussed before he could finish.

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Varty to call it the Athletic Fields Framework Plan. Motion carried 7-0.

Chair Anderson asked if this agenda item is a discussion item or action item. Mr. Stremcha confirmed it is a discussion.

Mr. Paige led the discussion to bring everyone up to date.

Chair Anderson said only one person on the current commission was involved in the initial process. Mr. Paige gave a history of the parameters that were given to HKGi to set up this initial plan. Staff at HKGi compared cities nearby and others further out that compared to the City of Elk River with existing facilities and similar demographics. They also considered improvements that would help drive economic growth to the city based on attendance of ball field events. Mr. Paige shared that Kevin Clarke was the person at HKGi that put most of the data together for the plan.

Mr. Paige expressed that there were a number of changes with boundaries requested by the commission during the process. Every time changes were requested it changed the layout of the other fields and facilities. He also expressed that Mr. Ellingworth had shared with HKGi that he would like them to avoid removing any fields during phase one to minimize impact on programming.

Mr. Paige continued to explain the process for the phases and reasoning. He also explained that they brought it back to the commission after the changes were made. The results are a combination of the site capacity study that acknowledges site limitations. The framework brings an idea that will technically fit but also leaves room for things to move within the plan as each phase changes. Landscape architects and planners at HKGi put the plan together with the main focus for layout being athletic programming. Chair Anderson said the only way to get somewhere with the discussion would be to walk through the plan going site by site since the commission will ultimately be asking to approve the framework.

Mr. Paige agreed and said that the financial numbers are going to be very high, so they have to be aware of that first. He said that the chances of it coming in under budget are not likely.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if there is evidence of it being economically beneficial to have these complexes so far out from the center of the city. He thinks they should rethink this and consider bringing this closer to the core. He said the gravel mining area should be considered.

Mr. Paige said that the economics of the tournaments is one side, but the other side is community identity. Just as the city has embraced the natural resource side of parks, they can embrace the athletic side as well. People can value both.

Mr. Stremcha said that they don't know the soil conditions or the sizing of the gravel pits at this point to make it a consideration. He also shared that facilities draw people and the Specht property being developed will add more people to the area around the PT Complex. He said that developing the mining area could be much further down the line.

Commissioner Goodwin asked if Commissioner Niziolek is asking for all the ball fields to go to the gravel pits or just some? Commissioner Niziolek said he doesn't have a plan, he is just saying that area of town is going to grow, and he wants to bring that point up. Commissioner Niziolek said he thinks that they should consider where the city is growing before, they make decisions on fields.

Commissioner Stewart asked about future potential connection points to the PT Complex. Mr. Stremcha explained that there are potential ones through MNDOT with growing developments. Chair Anderson said it looks like they are cramming a lot of stuff into a small place in the current plan. He said he is worried about the huge price tag.

Mr. Ellingworth said that when this plan was shared with the associations back in February, they loved the idea of being at one complex versus being spread around town. He added that they expressed that they enjoy the quiet and country feel.

Mr. Stremcha said phase one would include the rectangular fields at the PT Complex. Mr. Ellingworth shared his opinion that everything should be at the PT Complex as is and then as the city grows the northern piece (gravel pits) could be added.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he recognizes that we need to do the project in phases but doesn't

want to miss the opportunity of this northern piece of land.

Mr. Paige said the distance between the rectangular fields at the PT Complex is based on industry standards. They even added extra space due to a historical wetland line. Chair Anderson asked about the usable space. Mr. Stremcha said it is about 25 acres. Mr. Paige said the plans also include a lot of storm ponds. It's a defensible best practice plan.

Chair Anderson asked for confirmation that phase one is the rectangular fields. Mr. Stremcha confirmed this and explained the Project Phasing Potential plan. They are regulation soccer field size. The next piece is the Hales Field project because the school has that in their 2028 plan. It would be the east side of Oak Knoll. The left side would stay active during this process. There are a couple of different versions of this plan.

Commissioner Goodwin asked if the school district has confirmed that the Ivan Sand school is being removed for sure. Mr. Stremcha confirmed that it is still part of their concept plan, but he does not believe that it has ever gone to the school board. The school district will have a new superintendent within the next six months. Commissioner Loidolt asked what financial investment the school district would make. Mr. Stremcha said it would be sizable and similar to the Lions Park agreement with the schools. Commissioner Loidolt asked if there is any official confirmation from the schools on the investment. Mr. Stremcha said it is still in discussion.

Chair Anderson said that when he worked on a project with an Eagle Scout on Hales Field at Oak Knoll the schools informed them the project, they did would be temporary due to the plans for future changes.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if the Ivan Sands school would be demolished. Mr. Stremcha said it is still in negotiation who would demo it, but the plan would be for it to be demoed. Commissioner Niziolek asked Commissioner Loidolt what he thought about the plan if Ivan Sand wasn't torn down. Commissioner Loidolt said he would not want the fields there as they wouldn't fit according to this plan.

Mr. Stremcha said that because the projects aren't going out for bidding, they could still change things over the next six years as details change. Chair Anderson asked what page the alternate concept was on. Mr. Stremcha explained that on page two is the alternate plan with different parking options on the outside but that creates ADA accessibility concerns. Chair Anderson shared concerns about parking since he believes no one parks in the parking lot right now, how would things change with these new concepts? Mr. Paige said that with the new concept, the foul ball spray has been considered. He said this layout is similar to Castle Field in Anoka.

The foul spray line is commensurate with the level of play at each of the fields in these designs. Mr. Paige shared that he has coached many games at these fields, so he is aware of the current parking issues and foul ball concerns. He also explained his reasoning for the different spaces between the fields at Oak Knoll. He said that netting design could be expanded to catch foul balls and there is enough breathing room between the fields to still be functional.

Chair Anderson asked Mr. Ellingworth and Mr. Loidolt how tournaments would be used on these fields. Both agreed that they could use this complex for the ice breaker tournament as well as the others. The PT Complex is used for the older kids and DAAC is for younger kids. DAAC is dangerous for foul balls and one field has water build up. Commissioner Loidolt said that he is concerned about the train noise

at Oak Knoll. Commissioner Niziolek said that he wants a sound wall to put into the plan and budget since nothing is currently listed addressing the issue.

Mr. Paige pointed out that with this phasing plan so far is all rationalized with or without that piece of land north of the city being addressed. There wouldn't be anything wasted following this plan.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if they could just do three rectangular fields at DAAC. Mr. Stremcha reviewed the current plan for DAAC and explained the reasoning for what the design is. Commissioner Niziolek suggested contacting the Sherburne County Fair to see what the plan is with their property so considerations could be made to create a core for all the fields or not have the ball fields near there at all.

Mr. Paige pointed out that the plan for DAAC fits into the plan for programming for Parks and Recreation, not just as fields for tournaments and associations. The shared parking and fields there contribute to large events as well.

Commissioner Niziolek reiterated that he thinks there should be talk with city staff and the fairgrounds about the future of that land. Mr. Stremcha said that if they are adding land acquisition considerations, the cost estimates will grow. He asked the commission what the size and scope of their comfort was.

Mr. Paige said that relying on the fairgrounds for parking right now is dangerous considering they could sell and move. The value of that land is very high. Commissioner Goodwin said that one consideration she heard was something like a grocery store going in there.

Chair Anderson asked the commission if they were comfortable with the seating arrangements at the PT Complex. He also asked Mr. Stremcha if the next step was approving the plan at a meeting and Mr. Stremcha confirmed the plan would come back to another meeting and be voted on.

3. MOTION TO ADJOURN SPECIAL WORK SESSION

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



Dave Anderson, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk