



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation
Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, September 11, 2024**

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, Farmer's Market/Special Events Coordinator Karen Wingard, Recreation Assistant Ali Wallace, 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 Stewart to approve the agenda. Motion 6-0.

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

4.1 08-14-2024 Special Work Session Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Varty to approve the August 14, 2024, Parks and Recreation Commission Special Work Session Minutes. Motion carried 6-0.

4.2 08-14-2024 Special Meeting and Work Session Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Loidolt to approve the August 14, 2024, Parks and Recreation Commission Special Meeting Minutes. Motion carried 6-0.

5. OPEN FORUM

6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Pullman Place 2nd Plat-Park Dedication

Mr. Stremcha presented his report. He pointed out that the park dedication at the thirty-two high density residential units is an incorrect calculation so with the senior living component it has a park

dedication value of the \$28,400.

He shared that this item would go to City Council on September 16 so the developer is looking for a recommendation of any feedback the commission might have. The property would not have much land for park dedication, so staff is recommending accepting park dedication as cash.

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Fermoye to recommend to City Council to approve park dedication for Pullman Place 2nd Plat to be paid, at the applicable park dedication rate when the lot is released for recording. Motion carried 6-0.

7.2 Meadowsweet Bend-Park Dedication

Mr. Stremcha explained that this is a carry it forward conversation from a previous meeting. He also shared that one of the things that the developer returned with from feedback from the previous meeting is the inclusion of a trail system for connections throughout the development on the south side of the road.

Mr. Stremcha explained that feedback from the previous meeting presented questions about park dedication for the triangle portion of the property but also the access point. It is an opportunity for park dedication in lieu of cash. The developer has also made some deductions to the park dedication money because of the cost of the trail. It would be up to City Council to make that determination.

Ben Schmidt from Twin Cities Land Development presented. He said he does not have many changes from what was discussed last time but they heard what the commission said, and the thoughts are that the triangular section would provide access to Burr Oak Park and potentially parking. Also, they have a driveway that serves the existing house on east side of Burr Oak Park that they are using for a while, but they could eventually turn over that driveway to the City for additional access to the property as part of park dedication. As previously discussed, the developer included the concept of trails moving from west to east into the development plan but request a credit on park dedication fees since trails are not necessarily required on a rural section road.

Mr. Schmidt shared that at the last meeting the commission discussed a trail head that could go from the main road north through the property to a wetland, but they do not see how it would make sense, so they are not incorporating that into their revised plan. He pointed out that it is up to the City Council for approval.

Chair Anderson asked for clarification on the plan whether the triangle is going under the power lines and if there is a storm water pond on it which he does not believe can be park dedication.

Mr. Stremcha pointed out that the additional packet they were handed out tonight is what came in to staff yesterday. They have the option to accept a portion that is under the power lines or a portion that does not include the power lines. Mr. Schmidt said he does not believe there is a storm pond on the triangle.

Chair Anderson asked to clarify how many acres the portion is outside the power lines. Mr. Stremcha confirmed it is approximately 1.5 acres.

Chair Anderson then asked about C 2.0 in the packet and if the trail starts out on the north side and then crosses at northeast road. He asked if the trail is all on the south side. Mr. Schmidt confirmed that

it would stay on the south side and that the ordinance does not require a sidewalk and that City Council would determine it.

Mr. Stremcha then read the ordinance regarding sidewalks that was provided to the Commission as a handout. Chair Anderson said the ordinance was created due to the history of not creating sidewalks in the past. Councilmember Beyer said that it is usually the wish for the Council to want sidewalks.

Commissioner Niziolek proposed this idea of having a trail that would utilize the pedestrian traffic go by the Tamarack Willow swamp. He said that he knows of several long-term community members that would be concerned about the welfare of this swamp. Mr. Schmidt said that they looked at that, but they did not feel like that was the right place for the trail.

Relative to the preservation of that area they did put the sensitive area into an out lot so that it would not be part of anyone's property. It would either be given to the city or be owned by the HOA so it would not be anyone's specific property.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if they would consider extending that property south to help protect that identified significant piece of property. Mr. Schmidt said that the current use is not protecting that area at all including the neighbors, and whereas the developers are doing something that would protect it more than it is today. He is willing to consider extending it south to see if there are areas where they could move it south but making sure that there is enough area for homeowners to use. He can discuss this with their engineers.

The green highlighted trail on the map is the location of where the trail will be on the south side. Commissioner Niziolek said that ideally there would be a collector trail system in this area according to the trail master plan and this does not seem to have that. He said this one seems to cross a lot of driveways so it does not really work as a collector trail but if it was it would have potential to be able to collect members of the community and draw them to the Great Northern Trail.

Mr. Schmidt recognizes the idea of this being a collector trail. He pointed out it that it is a significantly more expensive trail considering it is a rural section. He does not know how to get around crossing driveways without it being a cluster development, but he was told that is not what is of interest out here. He said the distance between the driveways is vast compared to a regular neighborhood.

Commissioner Niziolek said then this cannot be a collector trail with this many driveways and current design, it would just be a sidewalk.

Mr. Stremcha asked if the commission would consider having the developer modify the trail to run through the Burr Oak property and past the storm water pond and then come through the rear of the properties and then run north? Commissioner Niziolek said that he does not believe that would be of much value with only cutting out five homes. Chair Anderson said by creating a 10-foot-wide sidewalk he said they are creating a long-term maintenance concern versus whatever sidewalk the Council requests. He does not see any value whatsoever to have a trail in this configuration. He is hoping the commission makes a recommendation for a collector trail as shown in the master plan even though it is not shown in this plan. He believes they need to follow their guidelines, and this does not meet those.

Chair Anderson asked if the county would allow the city to use the private driveway as an access point for the future. Mr. Stremcha said that staff have not explored that access point being it is a private driveway. With its current configuration as an alternative, with Burr Oak not being developed yet,

having additional land in that area even as a maintenance driveway, staff does see value in the future and would recommend having both the smaller triangle outside of the utility easement and the rectangular component of the easement.

Commissioner Stewart said it is still not clear what they could do with that triangle.

Commissioner Niziolek asked to have confirmation from the county to be able to use the driveway before he would want to act on it. Mr. Stremcha he would not be able to get that answer before the Commission would need to act on it. Chair Anderson said it is still 1.6 acres of land regardless and he pointed out that even if it is not a recycled asphalt driveway it is still additional land to the park regardless so he feels they should accept it either way.

Chair Anderson asked the commission if they had any additional questions.

Commissioner Niziolek said he cannot accept the entire east side because it is under the power line. Mr. Stremcha explained that his recommendation is because it does have access already and it does have value. The current power line has limited usability, but that is primarily because of its functionality as a storm pond. It still has value if the access point is available for long-term private or public parking.

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Loidolt to accept staff's recommendations for park dedication land including the smaller triangular area excluding the transmission line to the west and the 1.6 acres adjoining the southeastern part and the remainder in cash at the applicable market rate. Motion carried 5-0. Commissioner Niziolek abstained.

Moving on to the trail portion Chair Anderson asked the commission for input. Commissioner Loidolt suggested the possibility of running the trail along Ranch Road on the north side and then run into Burr Oak and then go north between lots 8 and 9 to hook up to the northern portion cul-de-sac. He said this would avoid a lot of the conflicts with the driveways and still get to the Great Northern Trail.

Commissioner Niziolek said they already have a trail on the south side of County Rd 33 and the goal is now to get to the GNT. When the conceptual trail was drawn there was intent to go by the Tamarack Willow swamp. This has been a concept and in discussion for about 20 years.

Commissioner Loidolt said he could put sidewalks then. Commissioner Niziolek said that it must be a collector trail. Chair Anderson pointed out that they are a recommending body and, the recommendation that they put forth will go to the council decision. Chair Anderson said that he recommends the 10-foot trail that is shown should be taken out and replaced with a sidewalk and also make a recommendation to follow the master trail plan to put in a collector trail that would go into this neighborhood, but what is shown does not serve that purpose and really has no value.

Chair Anderson asked what their thoughts are about pulling a trail out of this development because it does not serve a purpose. Commissioner Stewart said he agrees and pointed out that there are a lot of neighborhoods with no connections getting in and out of the neighborhood. It needs to serve the point of connectivity and if this will not serve that then there is not a point.

Commissioner Niziolek said he wants to make sure there will be sidewalks. Chair Anderson said council will recommend that.

Chair Anderson said his hope would be that planning would take out the trails master plan document with developers and make sure that trails are considered early on before plans get to the commission, and then it is too late. He is disappointed that they are to this stage and going to lose a major piece of their trail system that they spent a lot of time talking about when developing the master trail plan.

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Varty that the trail shown in the proposal be removed and recommend they strive to create a collector trail as shown in the master plan. Motion carried 6-0.

7.3 PT Complex Welcome Plaza

Mr. Stremcha presented his report. He provided a handout from HKGi showing the design of the welcome plaza, which was not initially included in the packet.

Included in the packet is a letter of intent regarding what they had proposed back in July 2023. Included in the agreement was a conceptual drawing of what the welcome plaza would look like and include. Some of the concerns brought up at the last Commission meeting was ADA accessibility and foul balls around fields five and six. In the new rendering those issues were addressed. The City Council reviewed the new rendering on September 3, 2024, and wanted additional feedback and discussion from the Commission. When they went to bid for the project the logos came in a little over \$30,000 when the estimate was a little over \$2500 a piece by the engineer. Staff's recommendation was to remove the logos to bring the construction bid down from 270,000 to 240,000.

This project has that fundamental component funding which is over a period of time not necessarily funds in the bank to date. The goal would be to fund the development and improvements of this welcome plaza on the front end versus seven years into the project as funds have accumulated over time. The naming rights of the Community Event Center is a built and established property, so it differs from this in that it is additional concrete show floor space. Staff used this as an opportunity to create a safer controlled pedestrian crossing.

Councilmember Beyer said this was on City Council consent agenda on September 3. The naming rights were \$350,000 over 10 years which equates to \$35,000 per year. This project is \$240,000. His concern is that this would be front funded by the City of Elk River. The city has only truly collected about \$20,000 so far. Councilmember Beyer said that the City has traditionally not funded anything up front more than 50% and this is significantly more. That is why the City Council sent it back to the Commission for more discussion.

Commissioner Loidolt said that he appreciates the concept and the controlled crossing, but he said that it looks like it is about twenty feet across, in the middle of the fields and looks like a big traffic jam. He said he does not see traffic wanting to go through there and that they would choose to go either instead. Chair Anderson verified that this is the main drive/parking lot. Commissioner Loidolt said that the ADA cars would be in a bad spot to get hit and he is appalled at the price of those logos. He is not sure where the pricing came from for stamping and staining concrete.

Chair Anderson said that he thinks it appears as though they made it narrow to accommodate parking.

Mr. Stremcha reviewed the engineers estimate and then the low bid that came in. Chair Anderson shared concerns that every time anything has ever been planted in the city that needs to be maintained

he sees a lack of consideration for future maintenance. While he does love plants and shrubs, he said that this looks like a lot of maintenance to him. He said that he would want to see a plan to maintain the beauty since he does believe landscaping is very important in the community.

Commissioner Niziolek said he thinks they are looking at setting a price limit and then what can they do from there. He asked what an appropriate amount of money would be to spend. Chair Anderson asked what fund would pay for it. Mr. Stremcha said the funds from the naming rights go into the park improvement fund so the money would come out of the park improvement fund and is not currently in the budget. Chair Anderson pointed out that the Commission has gotten scolded for spending money out of the PIF when they do not have it in the budget so he feels they should wait for another budgeting cycle, so it does not affect their ability to spend.

Councilmember Beyer said that it was a concern of the City Council as well to be fiscally responsible when it was not already in the budget. Chair Anderson said that while they want to work with the sponsor, they also want to get their monies worth.

Commissioner Loidolt asked to make a recommendation to have a work session on it. Mr. Stremcha said to Councilmember Beyer that the Council has decided to move it to a future date of discussion.

Mr. Stremcha said that the gravel out there is not an even level grade as far as a parking lot aspect. One of the significant concerns would be the cost of fill to make it even for drainage. Mr. Stremcha pointed out that City Council had tabled the item for a future meeting without a specific date so there is not a time frame with this item. The original goal was to begin work this Fall and finish in the Spring of 2025.

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to table the discussion on the PT Complex Welcome Plaza for a future work session to be determined. Motion carried 6-0.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1 Disc Golf Site Tour Recap

Chair Anderson thanked the community members and staff attending the disc golf tour. He then asked Mr. Stremcha to facilitate the discussion.

Mr. Stremcha asked the commissioners to summarize the pros and cons of Meadowvale Heights Park location first and then Burr Oak Park. This will help the Commission decide which site they would like to focus on and then they can work with community partners to develop a future plan. Chair Anderson asked those in the audience to participate as well if they wanted to.

The pros of Meadowvale Hights Park:

Commissioner Loidolt pointed out that it is close to town and there are a couple of ways to get in and out of it. Commissioner Niziolek said it provides potential for a phased approach, expansion, family friendly amenities, and paved trails. Commissioner Fermoyles likes the potential for easy access and creativity. Commissioner Varty agreed with the previous statements of creativity, potential phases, topographical diversity, and pointed out that it is an underutilized parcel of land.

The Cons of Meadowvale Heights Park:

Commissioner Loidolt pointed out that there is no parking. Commissioner Fermoye said that it is a long way to get into center of the park. Commissioner Stewart shared that he believes it would require solid planning to connect the golf sections. Commissioner Niziolek pointed out that pedestrians on the trail would be in the way.

Tim Schreider, resident of Otsego, shared that he has concerns about parking and pointed out that without a parking lot there would not be the ability to host a league or tournament as well as he views the park as only having room for about nine holes and that is with a lot of planning.

Commissioner Niziolek said there is about the same amount of playable usable highland as Burr Oak.

Katie Ellsworth, resident of Elk River, shared that she believes there would be enough spaces for eighteen holes, but it would need planning to connect to the usable highlands.

Pros of Burr Oak:

Commissioner Stewart said there would be a chance for parking and more shovel ready. Commissioner Varty said it would be easier to get started at that location and start making progress. Commissioner Fermoye said it would be easier because it is a big square. Commissioner Niziolek pointed out the nice Burr Oak trees. Commissioner Loidolt pointed out the mature trees and more shovel ready. Chair Anderson shared super cool topography and no current neighbors.

Mr. Stremcha pointed out that this park would have option of eighteen holes.

Tim Schreider shared his history of experience in the field of disc including competition and course design. He believes that Burr Oak Park would have the potential to be an 18-hole disc golf course that would serve all skill levels and abilities.

Cons of Burr Oak Park:

Commissioner Stewart has questions about easements and concerns about the power lines. Chair Anderson shared that other communities have courses under power lines. Mr. Stremcha said that the recommendation of the course design would have the tee box under the power line so the discs would not be going towards the lines. The direction of the tee boxes would be complementary to the power lines.

Commissioner Varty pointed out that it is buggy and has a lot of sand burrs. Commissioner Fermoye said that the land is wide open with nothing in or around it. Chair Anderson explained the history of the park land and why that piece of land exists. Commissioner Niziolek pointed out that soil erosion would be a major issue at this park due to usage.

Chair Anderson said that the sand burrs will be inconsolable and bad for anyone going off into the brush to get a frisbee. Commissioner Niziolek said that there will be a need to control the red cedars, so it does not become a thicket to allow the burr oaks to grow up. Chair Anderson also said that buck thorn could go wild out there, and it would need maintenance. He has concerns about it being too dusty.

Katie Ellsworth shared her concerns about the power lines limiting the course design. She also has concerns about how rural the location of the park is as well as the sand burrs. She also says she thinks

this course would be easy to intermediate whereas the Meadowvale location would offer more variety. It is also too close to the Zimmerman disc golf park location, which is very well established.

Chair Anderson said that Meadowvale Heights Park site wins for the number of positives and while there are challenges, but he loves challenges. He also thinks they could start planning and phasing it in right away. Commissioners Fermoye, Varty, Stewart and Niziolek all agree and also think they can start phasing it in right away. Commissioner Loidolt disagrees and says there will be a huge problem with parking. He pointed out that having a tournament with 40 or 50 cars would be a major issue. Chair Anderson said he could see there being neighborhood resistance.

Commissioner Niziolek said that if the community becomes more welcoming to roadside parking, they will save taxes on building and maintaining parking lots.

Katie Ellsworth asked if a parking lot could be put into the park since there could be space. She pointed out that it could initially be small or grow from street parking to a parking lot. Commissioner Niziolek said that it would be nice to have a south access.

The Commissioner discussed areas around the north and south neighborhoods that would provide roadside parking identifying the south side as the best option. Mr. Stremcha said that it is important to have visibility in parking areas for safety.

Tim Schreider said that if a disc golf course were to go into Meadowvale Heights, he recommended listing the course on a disc golf park finder website to gather feedback from users but he also said that he doesn't see this park as providing anything other than a neighborhood golf course to help keep it smaller and private.

Commissioner Niziolek said he thinks that would be good as he sees their goal as providing amenities for City of Elk River community. Chair Anderson said this is a giant undertaking to just provide a neighborhood course.

Mr. Stremcha said that after the work session and open house, and it was narrowed down to these two. Mr. Stremcha said that does not prohibit the possibility of something in the future if the commission chose not to pursue either park. There could be future pieces of land acquired through park dedication etc. but as far as what is available now, they are limited.

Katie Ellsworth said she still thinks this would be a good option if parking could be figured it out.

At this time, the commission concluded that they could not make a decision on either park at this time. Chair Anderson said he does not see a viable site in either of these options.

8.2 ECC Solar Trail Lighting and Other Cooperative Efforts

Matthew Fomby and Vern Iverson, members of the City of Elk River Energy City Commission presented. Mr. Fomby explained that their job is to look at the community and try to find ways to promote energy efficiency in the community. They would like to discuss ideas for solar lights on one of our trails and have about 12,500 dollars to spend.

Chair Anderson asked how many feet of trail they are looking at. Mr. Fomby said they would not know without going out for a request for proposal. They are just kicking off an idea, they do not have any

details. They would need to know if they would be interested in something from above, down on the ground etc.

Commissioner Niziolek said he wants to figure out how much trail they could light and then they could look at possibilities.

Mr. Fomby asked for ideas of average lengths of trails. Commissioner Niziolek said that there are a lot of varieties of lengths.

Mr. Fomby said he can go back to get multiple types of lighting prices and see how far that would get them and bring it back. Commissioner Loidolt said he thinks it is a good idea. Commissioner Niziolek suggested overhead lighting.

Mr. Stremcha asked if they were looking at something with a height like along highway 10. Mr. Fomby pointed out it could be a portion of trail that goes under a canopy of trees, etc. Commissioner Niziolek said they are looking for diversified links in the trails. Chair Anderson said they only want to put lights up if they need to. Mr. Fomby will get prices for overhead lights, potential lengths and will contact staff to come back to present the information. Vern Iverson gave a big thank you for the Orono Park renovations.

8.3 Horse Usage in Parks and Trails

Mr. Stremcha asked the commission for input on the reports of horses being seen by residents on the trails in local parks. Chair Anderson said that he has gotten calls from three individuals about horses in Woodland Trails Park scaring them in the park because it was unexpected. It used to be posted as a rule about 20 years ago, but it is not an ordinance, so it is not enforceable. He cannot think of any park in the city that is compatible with having horses. Commissioner Niziolek said horses are incompatible with other trail users. Chair Anderson said that horses cause trail damage resulting in a lot of maintenance. He thinks that users should be told about the trails for horses out at Sand Dunes State Forest. Chair Anderson asked if staff could draft an ordinance. Mr. Stremcha said staff could do that and come back to a future meeting.

9. PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE

9.1 Parks and Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Commissioner Niziolek asked about the timeline for anticipated surface work on the trail in Woodland Trails Regional Park. Mr. Shelby has not seen anything but will investigate and get back to him. Commissioner Niziolek also asked about the Rivers Edge Commons construction and Mr. Shelby confirmed it starts at the end of October.

Chair Anderson asked how many teams are in fall softball and would like a follow up presentation to the beginner's course that was installed at Hillside Park.

10. DIVISION MANAGER UPDATES

Mr. Stremcha stated that this can be removed from the agenda.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

12. MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING

Moved by Commissioner Fermoye and seconded by Commissioner Varty to adjourn the special meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 8:37pm. Motion carried 6-0.



Dave Anderson, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk