Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, November 20, 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 Director Joe Stremcha, 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
   Since it was a special meeting, a consideration of the agenda was not necessary.
4. ACTION ITEMS

4.1 2025 Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Stremcha, Mr. Baas, Mr. Shelby, and Chair Anderson met prior to this meeting to discuss the breakdown of the budget items that the commission discussed at the November 13th meeting.

Several items were recommended to be postponed via the green lined spreadsheet handed out at the meeting. Chair Anderson said that since there are several new commissioners, he made a copy of the budget the commission approved in November 2023 which he provided as a handout. On the second page of the handout in 2024 they began with a budget of $120,000 and had revenues close to $300,00 and then recommended the four items that were on the list.

Chair Anderson reviewed the completed projects listed in expenditures of 2024. That should leave us with $180,000 to start for 2025. Chair Anderson asked Mr. Stremcha if he was able to get the actual amount of Park dedication received. Mr. Stremcha said no because of software issues in the finance department they were not able to get at this time. Chair Anderson said it is not critical to have the number tonight, but it would be important to have for future decisions.

Chair Anderson went on to compare monetary amounts on both sheets, his and the one that staff put together for tonight's meeting with their recommendations. This is the list from $325,000 with detail from the spreadsheet that the commission had asked for at the last meeting. Items of concern are listed in blue. Chair Anderson compared his sheet and the sheet provided by staff. On the blue lined handout there is a lot more money listed for the 2025 estimate. The $100,000 coming out of park dedication and the $125,000 for coming out of park dedication for the Trott Brook barn playground was not subtracted from the sheet. He said now it is up to the commission to make recommendations to council for the 2025 park improvement fund and the park dedication fund going line item by item. The total in the $390,000 minus $225,000 is the total beginning balance in the upper right-hand corner.

Mr. Stremcha is not 100% sure of the sponsorship amount for 2025. $35,000 of the sponsorship comes from PT complex agreement. Chair Anderson asked about where the other amount came from. Mr Stremcha said that money would be from ballfield banner sponsorships which can go towards funding anything in parks. The additional money coming in would come from the liquor store fund transfer.

Chair Anderson would like discussion on each expenditure line item on the green sheet. Mr. Stremcha said in addition to these items listed the parcels of land that the commission discussed at the previous meeting could be purchased using Park dedication funds, but that fund has more limitations and strings attached.

Commissioner Goodwin clarified that depending upon which fund they use to purchase the land there are different rules tied to the land such as use. Commissioner Stewart asked what the money for a master plan would be used for. Mr. Stremcha explained that much of the original master plan has been completed mostly through the active elk river projects. Chair Anderson said this is the fourth master plan he has been a part of. The first two were done in-house and the third was a consultant. He said that he has always been disappointed by the results when a consultant was involved.

Chair Anderson said that doing a master plan allows the commission and staff to get into the weeds and spend a lot of time getting to know their parks system and analyze things in detail. Commissioner Goodwin said that she is wondering if waiting a year would give the commissioners and Mr. Shelby, the new Parks and Recreation Manager, more time to get used to the process and gather information. Commissioner Varty asked if Chair Anderson thinks that staff could get the project done in house with a little outside help. Mr. Stremcha said that it is hard to tell at this time. He suggested approving a smaller budget to start the project in fall of 2025 and then approve more for 2026.

Mr. Stremcha said that if more things could be done with internal staff, then consultants' money could be saved.

Commissioner Stewart said it would be nice to know the Parks and Recreation and Planning department calendar ahead of time so the commission could plan ahead and know when things go through the process from one meeting to another. I.e., when things go to planning commission, council, etc. vs when the Parks and Recreation is first introduced to a discussion or action item.

Commissioner Loidolt said that it is important to know what the people want not just the commission. They do not just want playgrounds and land but actual recreation. It is better to be initiative-taking than reactive. He added that if the parks and recreation department does not get any additional funding, they will not be able to do any new things.

Commissioner Niziolek said if they look at the Ridgewood basketball courts and did an evaluation they would know if it was needed or not. He feels they need more data before making decisions including a staff evaluation of current resources.

Commissioner Niziolek pointed out that Trott Brook Park has a basketball court one mile away from Kliever Lake fields. He thinks it is something to consider since they are so close to each other. Commissioner Loidolt and Commissioner Goodwin questioned if the Kliever Lakes neighborhood should be polled to see if they want a basketball court.

Commissioner Niziolek pointed out that Bradford Park is close as well so it would be a good idea to have each park focus on one main amenity rather than have the same in all of them. Chair Anderson pointed out that there is not enough money to have all the amenities in each park with the costs rising. Chair Anderson asked if they need to leave this in as a placeholder in the budget for now and they can have further discussion. Commissioner Niziolek said they need to have future discussions on what they keep.

Commissioner Loidolt suggested they leave the basketball court in as a placeholder and poll the residents for what they want. Chair Anderson shared that Mr. Baas said Country Crossings Playground is heavily used and needs to be removed. Chair Anderson supports because of Mr. Baas's opinion. Chair Anderson thinks there should be five playgrounds and not twenty-five. The commissioners discussed the current habits of park goers such as going to destination parks with multiple amenities, so the different age groups of kids have multiple things to do.

Chair Anderson believes there needs to be more input from the community members on what they have in their neighborhood. Commissioner Niziolek said he thinks they should remove the playground and wait until they get feedback from the community to make a decision. Commissioners Goodwin, Varty, and Loidolt agreed. Commissioner Loidolt pointed out that Highlands Park has lots of amenities and is close to Deerfield Park. Commissioner Niziolek said that he would like to spend more money on larger things vs. a bunch of smaller things. Community engagement is part of the master plan process and would be helpful with these decisions. Commissioner Varty said that it sounds like they are making a case for the need of a framework plan.

Chair Anderson said right now they do not want to spend any money because they are worried about how they are going to spend. Commissioner Niziolek is concerned that the basketball courts are too close together and they are setting a precedent of having multiple courts in too many neighborhoods.

Commissioner Niziolek asked Mr. Stremcha if the water tower park is technically park land yet. Mr. Stremcha said it is not yet but there is more to come on that project.

Beginning budget on the one spreadsheet in the upper left-hand corner that starts with $390,000 should be reduced by $225,000 to reflect the $125,000 for the Trott Brook Barn and $100,000 for Lions.

Below are the commissions agreed upon itemized review of the budget:

Park Improvement Fund

- Master Plan- Add $50,000 in 2025 and $50,000 in 2026
- WHHC FMR Partnership - Keep at $6,250
- Pt Complex-Keep at $35,000
- Ridgewood Basketball Court- remove 0.00.
- Kliever Lake Ballfields basketball court -Keep $50,000 but change to Kliever Lake Ballfields "improvements" and take out basketball court.
- Misc. Projects-Keep at $10,000

- Country Crossings Playground- remove. 0.00

(remove the equipment as staff recommend, do not take action this year, wait for community response in future for replacement options)

- Deerfield Basketball Court -keep $50,000.
- Ridgewood Basketball Court- remove 0.00.
- Trott Brook Farms Park Parking lot- remove.0.00
- Woodland Trails Nature Play area-remove 0.00

Park Dedication Fund

- County Projects Cost Share- $275,000
- Hillside parking lot-remove 0.00
- Hwy 10 Trail-remove 0.00
- Jackson Street Water Tower Park - keep $25,000 but they want to request that there be discussion with Parks and Recreation Commission before the money is spent.

The Commission would like to add a line item of $100,000 for the purchase of the Maher property to come from the same fund that the original Camp Cozy property was purchased from.

Chair Anderson asked about the parcel property acquisitions being added to this list. Commissioner Niziolek shared about the importance of having a recreational water way from camp cozy to Orono Park. He said they should focus on the Camp Cozy parcel as an acquisition as a priority of the two properties. Chair Anderson pointed out that having a willing seller, identifying the land purchase in the budget, and having it go to City Council could make it a reality.

Mr. Stremcha shared that priority should focus on purchase of the lot and then amenities etc. could be discussed in 2026 and beyond as well as grant opportunities.

Mr. Stremcha said that he recommends that they put the Camp Cozy lot in whatever fund the rest of the land came from. Chair Anderson said that the Camp Cozy land will sell this year so this should be in 2025 or they could lose it. Commissioner Niziolek suggested that they set aside $250,000 for a GNT trailhead so that it is not specific, and it could be the Nystrom property or anything else.

Chair Anderson said that the Nystrom property is not moving fast so he thinks they should wait on that. He is concerned that Commissioner Niziolek suggested putting a placeholder for the property purchase would cloud the budget. Mr. Stremcha said he recommends waiting on it. The commission agreed to wait on the Nystrom property being added to the budget.

Chair Anderson said that the community and staff and the commissioners are all stake holders in this process of creating a framework plan.

Commissioner Loidolt moved and Commissioner Stewart seconded to recommend City Council approve the 2025 budget recommendations that the commission has discussed, and Secretary Larson has recorded in the minutes. Approved 6-0

5. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn the special meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 7:57pm. Motion carried 6-0.

Dave Anderson, Chair

Tina Allard, City Clerk