



**Meeting of the Parks and Recreation
Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Wednesday, March 12, 2025**

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: Councilmember Cory Grupa

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, Parks and Recreation Manager Jeff Shelby, 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 Goodwin to approve the March 12, 2025, agenda. Motion carried 7-0.
4. CONSIDER MINUTES

4.1 Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes 02-12-2025

Moved by Commissioner Fermoye and seconded by Commissioner Stewart to approve the February 12, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes with the removal of January 8, 2025, under the consent agenda replacing it with Feb 12, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

5.1 Annual Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek to nominate Dave Anderson for Chair. There was no second to the nomination. Motion carried 7-0.

Moved by Commissioner Varty to nominate Commissioner Stewart for Vice Chair. There was no second to the nomination. Motion carried 7-0.

6. OPEN FORUM

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1 P25-01 & 0A 25-01 Villas at Fillmore 3rd Addition - Park Dedication

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to recommend park dedication for The Villas at Fillmore Third Addition be paid in cash, at the applicable rate at the time of recording, for six single-family parcels. Motion carried 7-0

7.2 P25-04 Ridgewood Hills 2nd Addition - Park Dedication

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Varty to recommend park dedication for The Ridgewood Hills Second Addition be paid in cash, at the applicable rate at the time of recording, for one single-family parcel. Motion carried 7-0

7.3 P25-07 Elk Hills 2nd Addition - Park Dedication

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Fermoye to recommend park dedication for Elk Hills Second Addition be paid in cash, at the applicable rate at the time of recording, for one single-family parcel. Motion carried 7-0

7.4 Oakwater Ridge/Speccht Farm - Park Dedication

Mr. Shelby presented his report. Since the last meeting staff and city council have continued to have conversations with the developer as well as community members to get to a point to determine what is acceptable park dedication.

Mr. Shelby presented a slide show that not included in the packet. The conversations continued to evolve up until the meeting, so he wanted to make sure they had the most up to date information. Mr. Shelby reiterated that the numbers are approximate due to ongoing conversations with council, staff, and the developer.

Mr. Stremcha added that with stages of the development occurring later, and the current field being tillable, the trail would not necessarily be developed now.

Chair Anderson shared that he sees the plan as like the commission's previous recommendation except for the 8-acre blufftop park. About half of the light shaded grey area is part of the blufftop which is about an acre, the rest is on the slope. He believes the type of structures they would want to build in this area would fit in that blufftop park giving patrons the view of the river that the commission wanted but it would not provide a large open area like Trott Brook Park.

Chair Anderson said eventually part of the low land area could be turned into turf for recreational play. Chair Anderson said this would still be quite a way for residents to walk if they are further out by the road. He said he believes linear recreation for patrons to walk and bike on is very popular in this neighborhood, so he thinks it is very important to make sure the trail connects.

Chair Anderson said City Council will see the commission's recommendations on Monday as a discussion item on the agenda, then the Planning Commission again and then Council again for preliminary approval. He thanked Mr. Shelby and Mr. Stremcha for their time and for taking the time to include him in the conversations.

Commissioner Niziolek asked what the square footage is of the area outside the bluff drop to the road and then from the north to the south. Chair Anderson said about 50,000 square feet or just over an acre.

Commissioner Stewart asked if the developer has given up on the idea of an HOA and dock. Mr. Shelby said he does not know as those have not been part of their discussions so far.

Chair Anderson said the trail is important but so is the river connection, the space for the upland amenities and the floodplain forest in the lowland.

Commissioner Niziolek asked about the width of the space adjacent to the trail on the north connecting to the floodplain. There was conversation about a lot going back and he wants to know how wide that space will be for the trail. Mr. Stremcha said it would be a minimum of 30 feet for a trail to be in a space between the lots.

Chair Anderson said that is like what they have in other neighborhood connections. The GNT is a minimum of 100ft but that is different. Commissioner Niziolek said the trail is 80 feet from the backyard of homes along the Great Northern Trail and he does not think the trail in this new development will be that same distance.

Commissioner Niziolek said he is focusing on this because that will be the major connection link to the rest of the community. He said that to access this park, outsiders would have to access the park by that trail. He said it is important to design that access point well. He also said there would have to be roadside parking for the people of larger Elk River to access the trail.

Chair Anderson said the trail to the cul-de-sac would provide that roadside parking. Commissioner Niziolek said that based on conversations in meetings over the past couple of years, parking in the cul-de-sacs does not seem to be a welcomed activity within the city of Elk River, and this is a much denser neighborhood than the others. Chair Anderson said that when the commission has previously been asked, they have always favored roadside parking over parking lots.

Commissioner Niziolek said that he would like onsite parking but designated alongside a road not in a cul-de-sac. He said that along the commercial area would be better. He wants it made designated and clear that there will be roadside parking, so the community does not get upset when it starts happening.

Mr. Stremcha said roadside parking would be better alongside the orange trail by the grey square area on the map. He pointed out that driving with a car would bring people through the main corridor directly to the park, not the area to the north. If they would be coming in from a trail access point once the MRT is complete, they would not be coming in with a car. Commissioner Niziolek asked if the major interchange would be on the northern side of the development. Mr. Stremcha said yes but it would still direct traffic onto the frontage road which would travel south and disperse into the development.

Commissioner Loidolt said that he believes they shot down a perfectly good park that could host an 18-hole disc golf course because of on street parking. He said it was simply because there was not parking. He thinks we are going to penalize the people being in this neighborhood by having on street parking and not a parking lot. There will be garbage in the yards and loitering that will be an inconvenience to the house owners. He feels if they want to make this a destination park for the greater Elk River residents, they need the parking lot.

Mr. Stremcha and Mr. Shelby said that if the commission wants to recommend putting a parking lot back in that area, they can whether it is the original one or a new one.

Commissioner Goodwin said that she thinks there needs to be a parking lot on both sides of the neighborhood because realistically she is not going to park on the north side and walk with all her stuff to the side with the playground. Commissioner Stewart asked how big the original parking lot on the north side was. Mr. Shelby pulled up the drawing from the initial Capstone project presentation and it showed 30 stalls.

Commissioner Loidolt asked how they would access that parking lot. Mr. Stremcha said eventually via the interchange but at first it will be the main road. The service roads will all be incorporated in phases as the development grows so not all in phase one. Commissioner Loidolt said that he likes the plan, but they need parking lots. Chair Anderson said that it would be better with a central parking lot than one on each side. They clarified that the red lines on the design represent sidewalks.

Mr. Stremcha asked what the commission's suggestion is on the number of parking stalls. Commissioner Niziolek said that there were ten cars parked at Houlton tonight so he feels this neighborhood will need at least 25 to 30. Commissioner Loidolt agreed. Commissioner Varty said that they should evaluate which side would have the heaviest usage.

Commissioner Varty said that it may not only be people from outside the neighborhood but also people within the neighborhood. Commissioner Goodwin said the type of amenities included in the park will affect how many parking stalls will be needed. If they are going to have amenities where multiple families are going to meet up such as a playground and picnic pavilion, then they need many spots.

Mr. Stremcha asked how the commission would feel about having indented parking along the street outside the grey park area on the map. Commissioner Niziolek said he is supportive if the parking locations are designated and clear to the people purchasing the homes.

Commissioner Loidolt asked how much of the park land would be taken up by those parking spots. Mr. Stremcha said maybe 7.5 % of the park land. Chair Anderson said he thinks that type of parking could work. Commissioner Goodwin agreed and said she has gone to other parks with similar parking, and it did not seem to disrupt the neighborhood very much.

Commissioner Loidolt asked if this would replace the option of a north parking lot or be in addition. Mr. Stremcha said it would be instead of and would provide 37 ten-foot-wide spots.

Commissioner Niziolek asked if they could do a mini version of that on the north side as well. Chair Anderson said he thinks just one would be enough. Commissioner Loidolt said that from the grey area down to the blue area is a slope and he has concerns about that. Chair Anderson said the slope meets ADA and he thinks central parking would be enough. Commissioner Varty asked if cars could still roadside park. Chair Anderson said yes, they could.

Commissioner Niziolek asked how much money would be in park dedication. Chair Anderson said that is incalculable right now and would be determined by City Council. Chair Anderson explained that per ordinance it is one thing but if Council does not follow the ordinance, it would be different.

Commissioner Niziolek wants to recommend that 50 % of that money from the park dedication cash go

towards finishing the trail in the flood plains in a reasonable amount of time so it does not end up being a dead-end trail.

Commissioner Varty said not to disagree, but does that leave enough money to build a decent playground up on the bluff? Commissioner Goodwin said she thought she understood that the money that is dedicated stay in the parks in this development. Mr. Stremcha said that was the recommendation at the previous Commission meeting. Chair Anderson said that he would recommend that the city just accepts the cash and not designate where it goes. Commissioner Niziolek said that he wants to make sure that when the development is completed, all the amenities would be in. He thinks that will cost at least a million dollars.

Commissioner Stewart questioned if they they could split the cash delegation to parks and trails. Mr. Stremcha said they can do whatever the commission recommends for the City Council to make the final decision on, but he suggested that they just accept the cash and then discuss the amenities later. Mr. Stremcha said they could create a wish list based on priorities and as funds become available, they can apply them.

Commissioner Niziolek said he is worried they are just adding another million dollars' worth of amenities they cannot afford. Chair Anderson explained that park dedication is a balance of land and cash. Commissioner Niziolek asked if he could make a request for the HOA to be a player in the development of this park since about 60% of the users of the park will probably be residents of the park. Mr. Stremcha said that is something to be determined in the future but as far as the park it was an all or nothing offer initially. The lowland could either be completely private or completely public.

Steve Bona from Capstone joined the discussion at this time. Mr. Stremcha recapped the parking lot discussion that was taking place when Mr. Bona walked into the meeting. Mr. Bona explained that parking is allowed on both sides of the street in this development and these streets are much wider than previous developments they worked with. He explained that in their last development in Ramsey they have parallel parking, and it has worked well. He also said that the park is just shy of two acres and adding a parking lot would really cut into that. Mr. Bona pointed out that the grey shaded box on the slide designated for the bluff park would be shorter by one lot size.

Commissioner Loidolt said one of the concerns he has is the on-street parking, garbage, and disturbance to the neighbors. He added that according to the changes Mr. Bona just shared reducing the grey space by one lot, the parking spaces would reduce to 25 from the 40 they originally estimated. Mr. Bona said he does not believe this park will need that much parking since most of the use will be from within the neighborhood. Commissioner Loidolt says he believes that with this park being on the Mississippi it will draw more usage including vehicles.

Commissioner Stewart said the other potential users would be trail users and that could add to the parking need. Chair Anderson said he does not believe this would be a major trail head. He also said he likes everything that staff has prepared including the gray shaded park and then with the inclusion of parking but thinks that needs a little more planning.

Commissioner Varty asked Mr. Bona if they had an issue selling the lots that are by the parks in Ramsey. Mr. Bona said he did not have any problems with that since some buyers place high value on living by the park.

Mr. Bona asked if there was a size in the gray area that they were looking for. Chair Anderson said

originally it was eight acres, but they have had to compromise to what they have now.

Mr. Bona said that they collaborated with staff to figure out a way to make it work and they don't know how to make it work in any other way if they were to remove more lots. Making it a 2-acre park is doable with the challenges presented. Chair Anderson said that the commission has compromised a lot as well from their original recommendations. He said they will see what the Council recommends.

Mr. Bona pointed out that the HOA park in their original proposal was removed. He said that it was originally down by the river, but they have since removed that original offer. They will have to figure out how to reincorporate that back in for the neighborhood. They would put that back into the north, not necessarily connecting to the bluff, but it does have to connect to the trail. A small piece of property with a dock in the highland down by the water. They could propose its connection via a private trail from the public trail and leave the fence and tree line that is down there now to create a border. He does not think there would be a lot of visibility from the trail, but the HOA would know it is there. Chair Anderson said it would be a great addition. Commissioner Niziolek said he is concerned people could be cited for trespassing. Mr. Bona said it would be a private area that the HOA would maintain. He said that the public could use a public dock if we put one in.

Staff and Commissioners reviewed and discussed the motion recommendations in the presentation.

Moved by Commissioner Goodwin and seconded by Commissioner Stewart to recommend acceptance of the lower land area of approximately 25 acres (the net area deeded to the city) as park land dedication giving credit for dedication at 50% rate equivalent to approximately 12.5 acres of park land dedication credit. Motion carried 7-0.

Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Varty to recommend acceptance of approximately 2-acre park as shown in exhibit as shown by staff on March 12th with the inclusion of approximately 20 parking stalls paid for by the developer. Motion carried 7-0.

Moved by Commissioner Varty and seconded by Commissioner Fermoye to recommend acceptance of the remainder of park dedication credit in cash at the applicable rate at recording. Motion carried 7-0.

Moved by Commissioner Fermoye and seconded by Commissioner Niziolek to recommend that the developer shall install the upland trail connections as shown in the exhibit shown by staff on March 12th. Motion carried 7-0.

Moved by Commissioner Niziolek and seconded by Commissioner Loidolt to recommend that the developer shall pay for the design/engineering specifications for the lowland trail as shown on the exhibit provided by staff on March 12th. Motion carried 7-0.

Moved by Commissioner Loidolt and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to recommend that the developer will maintain the farm field in agriculture with a roundup ready crop preferably soybeans until the property is deeded to the city. Motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Bona said they are excited about making progress on this park. He pointed out that park dedication comes in phases as they develop. It could be a 10-phase project so they will try to work as quickly as

they can to get the park dedication. He also wants everyone to know they are buying the land over time, so they will not even control the lower field while they are building out the first couple of phases. The owners could do something different from what has been discussed. Commissioner Niziolek said with that being said, do they have concerns about not getting the 25-acre park, but they get half of their development. Mr. Bona said they will provide park dedication as they go, they cannot pay ahead with park dedication. He said they are also working with the city to help contract the improvements such as the pavilion and playground privately to get a better price or schedule.

Chair Anderson asked if the family trust will still own the land. Mr. Bona confirmed that the family will do whatever they plan to do, which right now is still crops. They are still planning to farm this next season.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1 Parks and Recreation Commission By-Laws

Mr. Shelby presented his report and suggestions to the bylaws. He said they would make the updates tonight and bring back next month for recommendation for approval. He asked Chair Anderson if he wanted to go through staff recommendations first or go through each, section by section. He reviewed the staff recommendations first.

Chair Anderson said that he has thought about the rotating Chair quite a bit and he thinks of the job of Chair as a big job, and he has the time to invest in it. Commissioner Stewart said that while he thinks it might be good to rotate, he does not want to put a mandate requiring it. The commissioners agreed they don't feel the need to add a mandate to it at this time. Chair Anderson said he has a suggestion to have the Vice-Chair walk in his shadow and meet with Mr. Stremcha and Mr. Shelby during his monthly meetings.

Secretary Larson pointed out that the current bylaws are from 2017 but there have been amendments since 2017. Chair Anderson said he did not see any problem with items one through five. No one else did either.

Mr. Shelby asked the Commissioners to clarify what they would like staff to do with the recommendations presented.

Chair Anderson also suggested that the Commission go through the ordinances once a year. Secretary Larson pointed out that if staff completes the recommendations tonight the ordinances and the bylaws will match. At the April meeting Secretary Larson will provide a set of each for comparison.

The commission agrees to have staff update the bylaws with the recommendations per the staff report and bring back to the April commission meeting. The commission recommended to not include the requirement of rotating Chair and Vice-Chair. Commissioner Loidolt suggested that March is the month they review of bylaws.

9. RECREATION MANAGER UPDATE

9.1 Recreation Manager Update

Mr. Shelby presented his report.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Anderson pointed out that the commissioners can request that items be added to the next commission agenda by getting a hold of staff. Chair Anderson asked for an update on the County Rd. Mississippi Trail at the next meeting as well as Camp Cozy signs per request from Commissioner Varty.

11. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Commissioner Fermoyle and seconded by Commissioner Varty to adjourn the regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission at 8:37pm. Motion carried 7-0.



Dave Anderson, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk