



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL WORK SESSION ROOM OF ANOKA CITY HALL
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Nelson, Judy Botts, Dave Throne, Erik Skogquist, and Dave Steinbring,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Anderla, Mary Blankenship, and Ellen Ward

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa LaCasse, Recreation Supervisor and Jon Holmes, Public Services Supervisor

GUESTS: None.

APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes or corrections to the January regular meeting minutes, a **motion was made by Skogquist, seconded by Botts, to APPROVE THE JANUARY 21, 2015, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AS PRINTED.**

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

None

NEW BUSINESS

Canoe/Kayak Rental

LaCasse provided an update of a previously discussed topic: Canoe and kayak rental. Last October LaCasse met with Anoka County, the City of Ramsey, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and representatives from the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS proposed a pilot canoe/kayak rental program on the Mississippi River originating at Mississippi West Regional Park with a drop-off at Anoka and another at the Coon Rapids Dam. The NPS is waiting to hear if funding will be available. In the meantime, all parties have met and discussed this program, including a similar program involving bicycle rental. LaCasse indicated that implementation will not be until 2016. The initial pilot would be funded by the National Park Service, if approved. The biggest challenge lies in the ongoing management of the program such as equalizing the kayaks/canoes between sites.

LaCasse reported meeting with two individuals today who are looking to set up a rental business and maybe interested in being the outfitter that could assist with the program, as well as offering some kind of service of their own on the Rum River. These two are working on a business plan. Staff will put them into contact with the NPS when their plan is put together.

There are many parts of this potential program that needs to be determined. These are early days. Staff will keep the Park Board informed.

Skating Rinks Update

LaCasse referenced the agenda packet information provided relevant to 2015 skating rinks' attendance. The document provided was created fifteen days into the season. Now, forty-six days in, the numbers



have obviously increased, totaling closer to 4,500 people using our skating rinks during the season, averaging twenty-two people per day. She considered this a pretty good turnout.

LaCasse reported that staffing the warming houses has been and continues to be challenging. As of March 1 the skating rink season will end. She simply will not have staff available. Until then, she is attempting to piece together a warming house work schedule as best she can. Holmes stated his crew will continue to clean and flood the rinks. Next year we will encourage retired people to apply for rink attendance positions.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Anoka Nature Preserve

- **Trailhead and Playground**

Holmes reported that bids were received Friday, February 6, 2015, for the 2015 Parking Lot and Alley Project, which included the Anoka Nature Preserve (ANP) Trailhead area. Douglas-Kerr Underground, LLC was the low bidder and will be awarded the bid. Once the parking lot is completed, staff will connect the trailhead to the existing class seven trails weaving the trail through the trees cutting down as few as possible. The expected cost for the parking lot & ribbon curb for the playground is \$108,740.

LaCasse stated the shape of playground on the plans is not the final shape, it will be determined based on the overall playground design chosen by the Park Board. A handicapped access path has been added from the parking lot into the playground area to address ADA requirements. As for the clearing and grubbing plans, as identified on the diagram in the agenda packet, LaCasse confirmed that despite what was indicated on this diagram, we will not be clearing that entire .10 acre area indicated; only just enough to get the water & sewer stubs in for the future building. We do not want the area clear cut and then left for a number of years.

When asked about the natural field stone depiction in the upper right corner of the parking lot within the diagram, Holmes explained there will be a stormwater pond for the development. That upper right corner will be the outfall for that pond, which will drain into our parking lot. That is decorative rock around that outfall.

LaCasse referenced packet information for the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the playground at the ANP trailhead. This will not be sent out until the Park Board and staff are happy with it. However, we hope for installation in the fall of 2015. Staff could bring proposals back for Park Board consideration as early as April 2015. We need to know the perimeter shape for the playground so we can establish a containment area with woodchips, etc.

Skogquist encouraged staff to consider requesting a natural play area similar to that at Tamarack Nature Center or Wargo Nature Center. He felt it would be a unique opportunity to provide a play area that would fit the natural theme of this park. He hoped contractors would keep an open mind and present proposals of more than just a swing set or traditional play equipment. LaCasse cautioned that wooden structures installed in our parks have not always worked out well. Some have been burned in the past, and staff finds that wooden timbers have shorter life spans. Other types of materials do not seem to degrade as quickly over time. Skogquist concurred; adding that a culvert partially submerged in a hill might create some interesting irregularities. He hoped to see some creative proposals from vendors.

LaCasse indicated she has a list of 8 companies to send the RFP and is only going to send to companies that have nature-inspired product lines. The inhibiting factor might be the \$75,000 budget for this playground project. However, she indicated she will make adjustments to the RFP and plans to send it out the first week of March so vendors have a full thirty days to get back to us. Staff will encourage vendors to submit documents electronically for review at the April meeting. There will not be any presentations by vendors or arbitrary scoring systems like we have done for playground selections in the past.

- **Secondary Trails**

LaCasse reported she and Holmes have walked numerous existing secondary trails and have tied orange ribbons on trees and shrubs indicating the general path throughout the park. The orange ribbons mark the general direction of a secondary trail and are not meant to identify trees to come out. Some areas are

cleared so well from existing use that crews will not have to do any work to them. The neighborhood in the northern quadrant has cleared their own trails that join up with the class seven trails. LaCasse stated the challenge will be to create a secondary trail south of farm field by the river, which is thick with buckthorn and is wet. It may be difficult if not impossible to cut anything through there. Throne stated just having a mowed area for running on a softer surface alongside the trail should provide adequate opportunities.

Crews will only clear downed trees that obstruct passage and will mow with a flail mower a couple times a year. Staff confirmed the trails will be about 60" wide. LaCasse confirmed these will be multi-use trails, including those preferring to bicycle. Throne spoke in favor of staff's plans.

Project Updates

- **Mississippi Park**

LaCasse presented a slide show of Mississippi River Community Park's shelter area. She explained it is staff's intention to stain the underside of the shelter, assess the condition of the shingles, and rebuild the canoe landing. The entire shoreline needs some upgrading. The trail is breaking up, especially in the areas where it has been flooded over for many years. Staff will stretch the available funds as far as possible and will go back in 2016 to complete the renovation project if necessary. Nelson asked staff to check a collapsing drainage area located at the top of the trail just off the right field line on the old softball field, where the lower trail starts to go down and just to the right of the regular loop. Staff will check into it.

- **Peninsula Point Park**

LaCasse reported it is staff's plan starting May 2015 to address Peninsula Point Park upgrades, including the floors and walls in all rooms, the doors, window frames, and installing partition doors in the restrooms. This project is hoped to begin early this spring once temperatures allow. This will be a Monday through Friday project, hoping not to affect weekend rentals.

Skogquist asked about reservation numbers in relation to the increase parking facilities. LaCasse said she will pull together that information and bring back park rental numbers at a future meeting.

Staff indicated they were not able to complete the overlook renovation in 2014. We will utilize the crew members to replace rotten deck boards, but will be reusing any good decking by flipping them over and increasing the spacing between boards to improve drainage.

- **Polk Street Overlook**

LaCasse described the Polk Street overlook; the retaining wall is made out of wood and needs to be replaced – as shown in the photos it is starting to lean. Plan is to rebuild the retaining wall with the anchor block salvaged from behind City Hall. The landscape bed is lined with timbers that are rotting. The existing green railing will be painted black to match the theme of the rest of Riverfront Park. There are also rust issues to address. The outfall needs to be rebuilt. Staff plans to check the wooden stairs as well. The entire overlooks needs a facelift. Staff has found that under the snow, the concrete is starting to sink. LaCasse reported the sewer line runs right through the center of the overlook.

- **John Ward Field #2**

LaCasse reported staff will be adding an outfield fence to John Ward field #2 and redoing the foul line fence – similar to improvements at field #1. The Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association (ARAA) football has not played there for five or six years due to rolling field conditions so there is no reason to keep the area open for multiple sport use. In 2015, Dist 11 Community Ed has a good chance of collecting new adult softball teams because the Sand Creek athletic complex is undergoing a major renovation over the next two years. LaCasse stated this is a project slated for the first thing this spring.

- **Sunny Acres "Off Leash" Area**

LaCasse reported city crews have started brush clearing at the Sunny Acres off-leash area. Overhead aerials photos were shown, mapping out the borders, existing fence line, and trails of this unofficial dog park. Staff stated it will be best to access this park from the Cleveland Avenue parking lot to the north. People and their pets are already using this area. LaCasse confirmed the city can put out garbage

barrels, but simply can not afford to provide individual small bags so that pet owners can clean up after their pets.

Archery Hunt Harvest Update – Anoka Nature Preserve and Kings Island

At the request of Park Board member Skogquist, LaCasse provided an archery hunt harvest report for the last three years: 2012 through 2014. This was provided as part of the agenda packet information. She stated this last season, there was only one deer taken out of the Anoka Nature Preserve (ANP) and two from Kings Island. In 2014, the hunt was restricted it to residents only and 7 hunters in the ANP were allowed to hunt the entire season.

Skogquist stated the buckthorn clearing probably affected these numbers. He noted that the Friends of the ANP have previously spoken to the Park Board about the archery hunt up there. Some are unhappy with hunters present in the park. There are those who are unhappy with not being able to use the ANP during hunting season. Skogquist related information about a hunter that only hunted twice in the ANP because he was interrupted by a family walking by his stand and stopping to picnic. LaCasse stated she never received any feedback from the hunters about use by the public. Skogquist went on to state he would hope that perhaps next hunting season we could get Council to discuss this again, perhaps addressing changing hunting times/dates. Perhaps the school might be informed when no one will be out there. Skogquist stated he is aware no one from the high school has contacted staff with these concerns.

Holmes stated there is a lot of pedestrian traffic at Kings Island. He has also spoken with people utilizing the ANP and has not received negative comments about the archery hunt.

Skogquist stated he did not think it is much of a problem on Kings Island. It is just that with the HUNTING IN PROGRESS signs, school programs will not go out there. He felt it might be good for them to have some access in the park.

LaCasse indicated the City Manager was going to meet with the Anoka High School Superintendent last fall. The city made it known to the high school that if they have requests for time periods during which they want to access the ANP, to let us know. The school has not expressed anything to city staff. LaCasse stated staff questions how big an impact their not utilizing the ANP is to the high school because no one has come forward with a proposed use or official request to make changes.

Nelson confirmed the Park Board has made it clear we are willing to discuss the matter with them.

LaCasse went on to add she has not heard back from the hunters either way. She felt there was inherent value in having fewer hunters on the property last year, letting them hunt at their leisure rather than how it was done in previous years when there were so many more hunters out there. Allowing for Anoka "residents only" made the program easier to manage; we knew that there would be impacts to the hunting success with the construction and burn. Staff occasionally went looking for signs of the archery hunters & stand locations but never found anyone and only located 1 stand. LaCasse offered to send hunters a questionnaire asking them about their hunting practices in the ANP, which is perhaps the only way the city would know how often they actually hunted.

Nelson felt those expressing concern with being in the ANP during hunting season are perhaps those not exposed to hunting and are nervous about it. Skogquist agreed that might be part of it. Holmes stated that bow hunting is totally different than rifle hunting. Hunting from an elevated stand with a shot distance typically no more than 30 yards.

Steinbring stated most people walking through the woods are noisy, so hunters know they are there.

Skogquist stated at this point it might be worth discussing. Maybe there is a way to open discussions and find out if others have issues with this.

Holmes stated the ARCHERY HUNT IN PROGRESS signs are there as a courtesy, yet many people are still found to walk their dogs in the park during the hunting season. LaCasse added the complaints she has received are about people walking their dogs off-leash. Staff spoke with several residents of the Rum

River Shores neighborhood about the hunting; a few of them were disappointed they had missed the chance to hunt this year, and others had no issues.

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Concerts-in-the-Park**

LaCasse provided a list of scheduled performers for the 2015 Concerts-In-the-Park series. It was noted that at least one concert is scheduled to be held along the Rum River in Riverfront Park.

- **Winterfest Update**

LaCasse reported the 2015 Winterfest went quite well for not having any snow. There were bonfires, the city crew made a snowball launcher that shot hacky sacks, there was ladder golf, other yard games, wine tasting, and kids' activities. It seemed the kids' part was a success. The fine arts & craft show sale was not highly attended. Overall, we believe this was a winter event the city wants to do again. It has been recommended someone from the Park Board be on the planning committee next year. Planning for 2016 has already begun, some ideas included spreading winter fest activities out into the parks.

- **Bathroom Floors at New Castle Field Facility**

LaCasse reported that staff is still working with the contractor to get the bathroom and concession stand floors changed out before the 2015 season. The contractor is not confident their original sub-contractor who poured this floor can fix it. The contractor even obtained pricing from the flooring contractor who recently did Akin Riverside Park bathrooms. They are aware of our rapidly approaching deadline. This is a temperature/weather-driven project. LaCasse stated we should know by mid-March as to what contractor will complete this project. Ebert Construction has the final decision, but we have shared with them the city does not want a patch job. If a new sub-contractor is brought in we will have the ability to darken the floor color.

Steinbring asked if Jay Pomeroy has ever answered the question of the composition of materials at home plate. Is it as was proposed in project specifications or is the mix wrong. There is not much clay there. LaCasse stated specifications were to be a 50/50 mix. She will ask Jay Pomeroy to confirm this.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, a **motion was made by Steinbring, seconded by Throne, to ADJOURN THIS MEETING.**

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Time of adjournment: 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa LaCasse
Recreation Supervisor

Mava Mikkonen
Public Services Secretary/Recording Secretary

