



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL WORK SESSION ROOM OF ANOKA CITY HALL
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Nelson, Joseph Anderla, Mary Blankenship (arrived 7:02 p.m.), Dave Throne, Pat Walker, and Ellen Ward

MEMBERS ABSENT: Judy Botts, Erik Skogquist, and Dave Steinbring

STAFF PRESENT: Greg Lee, Public Services Director and Lisa LaCasse, Recreation Supervisor

GUESTS: Zilla Way and Jean O'Donoghue with the League of Women of Voters

APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes or additions to the May meeting minutes, a **motion was made by Ward, seconded by Throne, to APPROVE THE MAY 19, 2015, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS PRINTED.**

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

Representatives of the League of Women Voters, Zilla Way and Jean O'Donoghue, were at this meeting to present their concerns about environmental activities affecting bees and other endangered pollinators. They proposed a "Bee Safe City" Resolution, requesting its support by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and later by Anoka City Council. Ms. Way was pleased to learn that Anoka does not spray its parks with pesticides. We do use herbicides and fertilizer.

Upon discussion of what Ms. Way hoped to achieve with the resolution, she indicated it is the League's desire to get the word out to our community about the importance of bees and other pollinators and what each of us can do to sustain them. She reported that other communities, such as Andover, Coon Rapids, and Shorewood are currently drafting a similar resolution for their City Councils' consideration.

Lee indicated a resolution might not be as effective as putting this information in the *City View* newsletter, which is sent to every household in Anoka. This would make residents aware of chemicals in pesticides and what they do to the environment.

Walker fully supported this effort, noting the importance of stemming the reduction of our bee population. He felt the city should do whatever is necessary to support this campaign and support this cause one hundred per cent.

Lee indicated he would contact the city's Communications Coordinator, Pam Bowman, tomorrow and have her work with Ms. Way. Together they could include helpful links at the state level, the University of Minnesota, etc. in this publication. Lee and/or Pam Bowman will be in touch with Ms. Way as early as tomorrow.



A motion was made by Walker, seconded by Blankenship, to INDICATE THE CITY OF ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD FORMALLY SUPPORTS THIS "BEE SAFE CITY" PROPOSAL.

6 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Nelson stated if the League of Women Voters determines a resolution of support is still how they wish to proceed, Ms. Way was invited to contact the board again; and we will support this. Ms. Way indicated with this assistance from staff in getting this information out Anoka residents, the League probably would not proceed with a resolution to City Council.

NEW BUSINESS – None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Anoka Nature Preserve, Secondary Trails – Lee recalled at last month's Park Board meeting we talked about the Anoka Nature Preserve (ANP) and mowing secondary trails. These trails have been marked/identified. Should city crews mow it?

Throne indicated he was up there today riding his bicycle. A mowed path would be nice, and a five-foot path seems reasonable. With that, those walking the trails could walk side by side. As an added concern, Throne asked about adjacent Andover residents and whether their abutting properties, fences, etc. encroaches into the ANP. An overhead map was reviewed. While much of the property situations Throne noticed on his bike ride seem to go right up to the property lines, they look to be within private property. Staff stated the city has sent out letters to some Andover residents in the area who do indeed encroach into the ANP.

Lee stated with the discussion and direction staff has received during this meeting, he will direct that city crews should mow these identified secondary trails as discussed. Throne agreed doing so will make the area a lot more user friendly.

MISCELLANEOUS

Review Bi-annual Report to Council – Upon discussion of a date for Chairperson Nelson's bi-annual report to City Council, Nelson felt July 6 would probably be best. LaCasse then presented a Power Point presentation of items Nelson might want to present to Council. Walker asked if Park Board members could get a copy of this Power Point e-mailed to them. Items included were updates on: Arbor Day 2015, Memorial Park beautification, boat slips, park renovations/updates, Castle Field blacktopping to reduce dirt problems, football day, Mississippi River Trail on Kings Island, ANP/trailhead construction, Anoka Aquatic Center climbing wall and minor upgrades, and pedestrian tunnel artwork and lighting.

Buckthorn – LaCasse reported the city has been approached by a Boy Scout, seeking an Eagle Scout project. She spoke with him about possible buckthorn removal late summer/fall 2015. Once he has put his project together, he was invited to get back to LaCasse.

Possibility of Canceling July Park Board meeting – Park Board members and staff discussed the possibility of canceling the July 2015 regular Park Board meeting. With no one opposed, a **motion was made by Ward, seconded by Blankenship, to CANCEL THE JULY 2015 REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD.**

6 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Riverboat Business – Anderla requested an update on any riverboat activity/discussions. Lee reported there has been no contact, and city staff has heard nothing since the last report.

Anderla asked if the Park Board can have some input on how the city's Economic Development Director advertises our Peninsula Point parking lot and building. Anderla indicated he was not opposed to a riverboat enterprise in one of our parks; just how it is advertised. He is opposed to giving our park away

to an enterprise. Anderla asked that this matter be placed on the August 2015 regular meeting agenda for further discussion. Staff was asked to send the Park Board a copy of what the most recent advertisement was, including the letter to the riverboat captain.

Anoka Nature Preserve – LaCasse explained how the river bank of the Anoka Nature Preserve got mowed Friday, June 12, 2015. Someone from the Prairie Restoration group took a flail mower to the bank. This activity was called in by a number of passersby. When approached by staff, Josh Richardson of Prairie Restoration provided an explanation for this activity. (See June 16, 2015, memorandum of explanation from Erik Thorvig, City of Anoka Economic Development Manager.) Basically, they were aware of the plants and shrubs within the project area and were planning to flail mow open areas and weed whip between shrubs. City staff was informed the mowing is a very critical step for the long-term success of the plantings. Prairie Restoration will be meeting August 17, 2015, at 1:00 p.m. to discuss restoration. LaCasse wanted the board to be aware that Prairie Restoration will still come in and do weed removal, but not on a broad scale. Chris Lord, Anoka Conservation District, is in the loop and agrees the weed control is important. This mowing will not be an ongoing activity. It is merely part of this prairie restoration project for a couple of years. It will eventually go natural.

Nelson felt it advisable to somehow notify the public of this “management area”. LaCasse suggested putting a periodical in a pamphlet box near this site. Anderla suggested sending it to the residential association in that area as an FYI.

ADJOURNMENT

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

6 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Time of adjournment: 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa LaCasse
Recreation Supervisor/Cemetery Administrator

Mava Mikkonen
Public Services/Recording Secretary



MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 16, 2015
TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Erik Thorvig, Economic Development Manager
RE: Anoka Nature Preserve Bank Restoration Project

On Friday, June 12th mowing was occurring on the restored river bank in the Anoka Nature Preserve. Staff reached out to Prairie Restoration, the company that is in charge of the restoration project to better understand the scope of the mowing. Josh Richardson of Prairie Restoration had the following response:

"I just discussed the mowing that we did with Patrick Kelly, our Management Coordinator. Patrick just visited the site and we both agree that the mowing is a very critical step for the long term success of the planting.

"The planting is less than one year old and has heavy non-native legume component (sweetclover and alfalfa). These species were present in the soil in this particular part of the project area, and they grow faster than the desired native grasses and wildflowers. The height of the non native plants is several feet and the majority of the native plants are only a few inches tall. If they are left unmowed, the weeds will out-compete the natives by creating shade and taking up moisture. Mowing helps the desired natives get the light and moisture they need to develop into mature plants. Mowing also keeps the weeds from setting seed.

Although this area is intended to be an unmowed buffer in the long run, timed mowing in the first year or two of growth are critical to establishing the desired native species. Native grasses are critical to the functionality of the buffer and without mowing, they may not establish well.

The site could require more mowing during this growing season, depending on how the weeds respond. In the future, other management techniques will be employed, such as spot mowing, spot spraying, and dormant mowing (mowing in early spring before the site before active growth begins.) The techniques and timing we use to maintain a native buffer are based on our extensive professional experience and our desire to create the best possible long term results.

We are aware of the shrub and tree plantings within the project area that were installed by the landscapers (Lan De Con) as per the project plans. The person who mowed was aware of them because he was with us when we conducted the permanent seeding, and the shrubs were installed prior to that. Our intent was to tractor flail mow in open areas and weed whip between shrubs. Tractor flail mowing is more efficient and also does a better job of mulching up the weed material into small bits so it doesn't smother out the native grasses."

This information was reviewed by Anoka staff and Chris Lord of the Anoka Conservation District. It was agreed that this approach makes sense for the long term restoration plan and have directed Prairie Restoration to proceed with the project. If you have any questions my contact information is 763-576-2723 or email ethorvig@ci.anoka.mn.us.