



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 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, Dave Throne, Erik Skogquist, Dave Steinbring, Pat Walker, and Ellen Ward

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mary Blankenship

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

GUESTS: Ellen Woody

APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes or corrections to the last meeting minutes, a **motion was made by Skogquist, seconded by Throne, to APPROVE THE AUGUST 18, 2015, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AS PRINTED.**

6 ayes – 0 nays – 1 abstention (Ward). Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

Pedestrian Foot Bridge – Ellen Woody, resident of the Bridge Square apartments, First Avenue, Anoka, addressed the Park Board and staff about bicyclists riding their bikes across the pedestrian foot bridge between Akin Riverside Park and Ferry Street. There is a sign at either end of the bridge directing bicyclists to get off their bikes and walk them over the bridge...no one does.

Ms. Woody felt the trail at Akin Riverside Park is too narrow and not conducive to bicycling. She suggested realigning the trail up Second Avenue from the boat ramp, across Main Street, and get back over to the City Hall trail. She indicated another map shows the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) traveling right across that bridge.

Ms. Woody felt bicyclists riding across this pedestrian foot bridge is hazardous. Senior citizens from the Bridge Square high rise frequently use the bridge to go over to Walgreens. It is dangerous when cyclists ride across the bridge at the same time.

Lee reported that Ms. Woody brought this matter to Council's attention recently. Since then, Lee has spoken with the Police Department and made them aware they need to enforce the rules better with regard to this eight-foot wide footbridge. MRT trails are regularly ten feet wide with a two-foot safety zone, totaling a fourteen foot width. This eight-foot wide bridge is not wide enough to support multi-use. This is the same situation with the Main Street pedestrian tunnel. Bicyclists are required to dismount and walk through the bridge, too.

Lee went on to note that when the middle school kids recently painted the pedestrian tunnel between City Hall and Akin Riverside Park it became somewhat dangerous. We had to put up signs so bikers knew there was activity going on, similar to when the new LED lights were being installed. We need to somehow better educate the bicyclists.



While there is signage at both ends of the bridge for no bicycle riding across the pedestrian bridge, Ms. Woody said she has asked riders if they saw them; and they reply they do not notice those signs.

Nelson stated it is difficult to enforce this. Turnstiles would hinder bicyclists, but it would also make it difficult for pedestrians with wheelchairs and walkers.

Lee reported the city will have full-time security officers in the downtown area twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. With this we hope to have better opportunity to provide public enforcement and education.

Anderla asked about bicycling in the downtown area. Is there no signage about that anymore? Lee stated no; no bicycling in the downtown area is a city ordinance.

Ms. Woody suggested the trail maps be changed, deterring bicyclists from going from Monroe Street and through the parking lot of Bridge Square.

Upon discussion of trail width standards, Lee confirmed that a typical shared trail standard, since the mid-1990s, is ten-feet wide. The (Greg please insert the year this foot bridge was constructed) pedestrian foot bridge was built to standards of its time.

Anderla suggested painting something directly on the surface of the bridge to catch the eye of the bicyclists.

Throne commented that as a bicyclist who travels that pedestrian bridge three to four times a week, he finds there are very few times when someone is on that bridge. However, he does understand Ms. Woody's concern. Steinbring, also an avid bicyclist, agreed with Throne's comments.

Lee stated the ultimate solution would be to build another bridge south of the pedestrian bridge connecting the boat ramp to Peninsula Point Park. This would be the ultimate goal of our River Walk Trail.

It was noted that much of this is a matter of common courtesy. However, Nelson stated we need to do what we can to address this problem. Lee stated he has already directed that during primetime there be police officers more readily available. Security officers will include this pedestrian bridge area as part of their watch.

Nelson concluded stating we hope we can address this concern and find an equitable solution for all.

NEW BUSINESS

Park Board Vacancy Update – Lee announced that one application was received for the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board opening. Margret Kallstrom applied and was appointed at City Council's October 19, 2015, regular meeting. We will be providing her with appropriate Park Board information to get her up to speed. Ms. Kallstrom will be joining us at the November regular Park Board meeting.

Bonnell Field/John Ward Field #3 – LaCasse reported that we are planning to replace the stormwater pipe running through Bonnell fields next spring, which will affect playability of the field closest to the Aquatic Center. The pipe runs all the way through Bonnell Park diagonally. As a result, city crews started making updates to John Ward field #3 to provide additional playing area. It was reshaped, and we are replacing the fencing. We hope to have this field available for the 2016 season in that we do not want to negatively impact middle school athletics.

LaCasse stated she is working with the athletic association and Marv Johnson, Community Education, with a few of the playing field adjustments for 2016.

In conjunction this Bonnell field stormwater replacement, we are attempting to get the irrigation system back in working order and will try not to impact the 2017 season. City staff feels it makes sense to proceed with this project along with the street renewal in the area.

Nelson asked when we are replacing the restrooms at John Ward Park. Lee estimated it was pushed back to 2020 or thereabouts.

Lisa indicated staff will bring this item back in November or December for further discussion when plans are more definite. As for improvements to the John Ward fields #1 and #2, we are considering leveling them back out without doing a full strip.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

State Shelter Acquisition – Lee reminded the Park Board that the State of Minnesota plans to discard a steel shelter frame currently located near the state hospital grounds. City staff has submitted a request to the state, asking if we might acquire this twenty-five by forty-two foot frame. The thought is to disassemble and relocate it somewhere along our city trails. We might even make two picnic shelters out of it. Possible locations for a shelter made from this frame material could be in the Anoka Nature Preserve at the confluence of the two main trails, along the Vern Emmans Bluebird Trail; or maybe at Kings Island by the pond.

Nelson expressed his concern with the possibility we would be creating a shelter for transients or giving those so inclined an opportunity to tag it. However, he agreed with staff that the Kings Island location might be good.

LaCasse suggested getting rid of the existing George Green pavilion and replacing it with a large facility.

Lee asked the Park Board to think about this opportunity and our options. We will try to acquire the structure by the end of this year.

Nelson suggested making two shelters out of it. Creating a fireplace feature within a shelter, like they had in the original structure, would look great.

Walker stated this shelter framework is currently very near one of our trails which we are trying to beautify. Why would we remove it? Nelson acknowledged that the shelter frame is on the state's private property, and they want it removed. Walker asked if it is worth the effort. Lee's response was it is valuable construction material and would be a simple matter to make another shelter out of it. Lee stated this could even be an Eagle Scout project.

Further discuss Riverboat Enterprise Details – Lee reported the latest report he has on riverboat activity within the City of Anoka is he contacted Vista Cruises out of Duluth, Minnesota. They were invited to come down during the spring of 2015 and discuss opportunities. They were too busy and suggested perhaps in October 2015. We have not heard from them, but Lee will do a follow-up. The plan is they would operate out of Peninsula Point Park. However, he noted there are concerns about this riverboat venture taking over the park or even part of the park.

Anderla referenced the August meeting minutes, whereby, the Park Board discussed moving parking stalls, etc. He referenced the March 23, 2015, form letter Erik Thorvig, then Economic Development Manager for the City of Anoka, sent to numerous riverboat captains in an effort to entice them into operating out of Anoka, offering them a number of things to get them here. Anderla stated his position on this whole issue is not that he is against a riverboat coming to Anoka, but the park amenities need to be shared. When the city has its discussions with riverboat representatives, it needs to be made known that we will need to share. Do not offer them the whole park without discussing it with the Park Board. Anderla stated if we advertise this again, we need to clean up the language in any letter sent out. They need to understand it is a city park, so they understand it will be a shared park. Anderla personally was not concerned about the number of parking spots involved.

Lee felt there could be ways to accommodate both riverboat and park usage for parking. He noted that with the riverboat use of Peninsula Point Park, part of the revenues received would go into our park funds.

Nelson felt that we want park visitors to be able to use the park without being pushed out due to riverboat activities. That would be an element he would ask staff to keep in mind while negotiating with riverboat

operators. Lee noted this and added that any weddings utilizing the park could also charter the riverboat, adding a significant amenity to park usage.

Anderla reiterated he does not care about the mechanics of the parking; they can fluctuate. He just wants riverboat people to understand this is not an exclusive use for them; it is to be a shared facility. Peninsula Point Park was paid for by the citizens of Anoka who should be able to have access to it. He reiterated he wanted it understood up front that this will have to be a shared facility.

Walker asked if anyone has checked on Champlin's side of the river. There has been considerable talk about putting in a marina someplace. We should know what they are planning. He stated he is not really a fan of a riverboat operation here unless it is considerably profitable for the city. We also do not want to duplicate their efforts just to find out Champlin is planning something similar. Lee confirmed city staff has talked with Champlin. There would be other ports-of-call for any riverboat who operated in this area.

Nelson noted Mary Blankenship is absent from this meeting, but she has provided written material stating she agrees with Joe Anderla's position one hundred per cent.

Nelson asked if there would be overflow parking or would the only overflow be in the form of the former Carpenter's Hall lot at the top of the hill. Lee's response was the biggest boat that could operate out of this location would be a 149 passenger boat. Boats holding 150 passengers and up kicks in Coast Guard regulations. With 2.2 people per vehicle, only about 75 parking stalls would be used at any given time for riverboat patrons. These 149 passenger boats have a real shallow draft.

It was also noted that previous considerations of docking behind City Hall was ruled out in that maneuverability was questionable at best. Nelson stated even with kayaking he was hitting rocks in that area.

Anoka Nature Preserve Trailhead Update – LaCasse reported that staff is waiting for playground equipment to arrive. The concrete footings have been poured. She indicated the vendor providing the equipment, Cre8Play, has been using our pieces at shows throughout the country this summer. She is hoping it gets installed by the end of October. Staff is working toward getting some additional pieces from Cre8Play due to their lateness and for using our pieces as show pieces.

Anderla asked if staff has received additional inquiries from joggers and runners about additional paths in the ANP. LaCasse said she has not. Anderla added while it seems like a nice path, there does not seem to be any place sit; no benches. LaCasse stated the Vern Emmans bench has been installed adjacent the river near the blacktop trail.

Anderla asked about the archery hunt, noting the signs that are up asking park users to stay on the trails. He queried whether we take the signs down when there is no hunting going on during the season. LaCasse indicated she was not planning on doing so. She stated the signs she put out specifically spell out some of the hunting rules so the public will be informed. We also do not map out where the hunting stands are. Anderla added when we were talking with Mr. Blankenship, he wanted trails that followed deer walking trails. If we make alternate trails through that park, how do we separate those out? LaCasse stated we would continue to request people to use gravel trails throughout the archery season.

King's Island Channel Update – LaCasse reported that contractors did a review of the King's Island channel last week. There are places with very little flow in the channel, and they discussed how and why. There needs to be some adjustments by Sunram. Adjustments to other things is New Look's responsibility. There is some question as to whether or not the channel will be navigable for watercraft. We need to go through a season with high water.

Nelson felt that big stormwater pipe coming off the Highway 10 is bringing sand down and plugging that whole area up.

Lee reported the City of Ramsey was planning for a development in the Rivlyn Avenue area. They contracted for the installation of utilities and removed trees and vegetation before realizing a lot of dumping has occurred in that area over the years. In the end, they found the development project not

cost effective. They might look at some state or federal grants to clean up the site. Village Bank took possession of the property and will close up the site. The trail connecting with King's Island needs to be put back in place and the site revegetated.

Anderla asked if there are any plans to put benches on King's island. LaCasse stated staff has not talked about that. Lee asked if that was something the Park Board would be interested in. Skogquist asked if the city's web page contains information to the public about a donation policy that might produce needed benches. He felt it would be nice to have a bench at King's Island and at the Anoka Nature Preserve. LaCasse indicated that the Vern Emmans bench was installed mid-summer. LaCasse indicated she would follow up on that. She would also put something in the next city newsletter.

MISCELLANEOUS

Waterfowl for Warriors Update – LaCasse indicated the fourth and last Waterfowl for Warriors hunt is scheduled for Saturday October 24, 2015. Deer hunters have been asked not to be present during these Waterfowl for Warriors hunts. To date some 80 veterans have been involved in the different hunts. Along with numerous volunteers. Scott Wahl and Orville Johnson were featured in a recent Star Tribune article. Framed copies of this article (shown to the Park Board) were presented to those two gentlemen, as well as with Office George Walker. A fourth framed article will go to Jeff Weaver who has been very instrumental in assisting with these hunts and who provides food for the after-hunt lunches. The city was presented with a plaque of thanks for supporting the Waterfowl for Warriors hunt. Several photos of the on-site hunt were shown to the Park Board. Board members were invited to the site for the after-hunt lunch. There will be a hunt for the volunteers scheduled for November 5, 2015.

Other Miscellaneous

- **Electric Locks at Akin Riverside Park** - Anderla asked how these were working. Staff reported the locks are working well, but vandals still managed to vandalize the inside of the bathrooms. Vandalism costs in 2015 in our parks are significant. Anderla asked if it would be possible to break out the cost of park vandalism and for theft in 2015. Nelson stated he too would be interested in that information.
- **Seasonal Projects** - LaCasse reported additional activities of staff include preparations for Halloween, the upcoming tree lighting ceremony, and the dam boards will be removed the week of November 2-4. Docks are being taken out now. The public dock at Akin and a portion of the one at City Hall will be accessible through the month of October.
- **Boat Slips** - Nelson asked if all Akin Riverside Park boat slips are rented. LaCasse responded that all are rented, and she expects that to be repeated during 2016.
- **Vandalism and Vagrancy** – Lee reported there is a very large influx of vandalism and vagrancy in the City of Anoka. A vagrancy task force has been organized and has met several times to work on existing issues. The city's stance is we will enforce our ordinances. One step in this direction is the hiring of full-time sworn police officers who will patrol the downtown area, plus two security officers. We will have a twenty-four hour coverage of this area. In an effort to make these officers more mobile, consideration is being given to providing them a UTV vehicle. While there are housing places that invite vagrants/homeless in, at 7:00 p.m. they remove these people from their facilities. The City of Coon Rapids was recently successful in providing beds for twelve homeless. It is felt the reasons for the vagrancy influx is it is safer here in Anoka than in Minneapolis; and, as the county seat, they receive a lot of free things. Hope for Youth is providing positive policies and not just giving out free items. Also, there are operational changes within both Stepping Stones and Hope for Youth.

Ward stated the vagrants she has spoken with have confirmed they are coming from Minneapolis by train because we are giving out free stuff. These are not just Anoka youth; they are coming from other areas.

LaCasse added that city staff have to go in and clean up the campsites they create.

- **Intersection of Seventh Avenue and Grant Street** - Steinbring asked what is going on at this Seventh Avenue and Grant Street intersection, noting numerous flags in the area. Lee stated these are Anoka County roadways, and they are looking at upgrading the signal system. They are surveying and putting that information into their plan. Steinbring asked if a sidewalk will be installed. In response Lee stated the county is considering turning Grant Street back to the city once reconstructed. When that happens, we can negotiate how it gets built back. It is likely we will want to narrow up that street and maybe provide a walking trail connecting back to the regional trail. Grant Street does not need to be forty-four feet wide.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Aquatic Center Annual Report
- Master Fee Schedule

ADJOURNMENT

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

Time of adjournment: 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa LaCasse
Recreation Supervisor

Mava Mikkonen
Public Services Secretary/Recording Secretary