



## Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE  
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD  
TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2016 – 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, Margret Kallstrom, Jennifer Shoemaker, Erik Skogquist, and Dave Throne

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Steinbring and Ellen Ward

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa LaCasse, Public Services Administrator; Jon Holmes, Public Services Supervisor; and Chuck Darnell, Associate Planner

GUESTS: Members of the Planning Commission: Chairperson Don Kjonaas, Karna Brewer, Pete Rech, Sandy Herrala, Borgie Bonthuis, Manley Brahs, and Jim Cook.

OPEN FORUM – None.

### APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes or corrections to the February meeting minutes, a **motion was made by Skogquist, seconded by Shoemaker, to APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 17, 2016, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AS PRINTED.**

**5 ayes – 0 nays – 2 abstentions (S. Nelson and M. Blankenship). Motion carried.**

### NEW BUSINESS

**ANOKA STATION PARK MASTER PLAN** – At this time City of Anoka's Planning Commission members and staff joined the Park Board to discuss the Anoka Station Park Master Plan.

LaCasse provided overhead drawings of the Anoka Station Park area. Its location was defined as north of the railroad tracks and west of Fourth Avenue along the Rum River. Several parcels encompass this site: two owned by the city and two owned by the county.

LaCasse reported that conversation started in the fall of 2015 when a developer expressed interest in the area where the buildings are being proposed. (Please see the concept plan found in the agenda packet.) Original development concepts involved relocating the Rum River Trail further to the west to accommodate townhomes. There is a conservation easement in addition to the Wild and Scenic river easement that affects the use of the properties. The original development proposal was rejected by the city due to the type of development being proposed. Per the Planning Commission and staff, the city is looking for a higher density project due to its proximity to the commuter rail station. Overhead photos of the site were shown.

LaCasse reported that any work that occurs within the easement areas requires Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approval. City staff has requested permission to complete a woodland restoration project that will involve the removal of buckthorn, deadfall, and other undesirable vegetation. The DNR has authorized the project, but not to a total clean-up like what occurred in the Anoka Nature Preserve. City crews have begun to remove the buckthorn and some of deadfall in the dry areas. Much



of the area is classified as wetland so the work will be continued in late fall and winter of 2017 when access allows.

LaCasse reported there is a stone wall that runs the length of the property near the river. We currently do not know the history of the wall. We assume it is connected to the state hospital doctor cottages. It closely resembles the rock walls built on the road where the state hospital barns were previously located – so it is likely that it was built in the early 1920s. There is a desire to provide public access near this historic wall by either means of a boardwalk trail or unimproved grass trail. When asked by Shoemaker if the wall will be restored, LaCasse responded that is unknown at this point. The wall is in various levels of condition and some areas have fallen over or have trees growing through it.

The existing feral cat houses will be removed. However, they are on county property; and we have permission from the county to remove them. LaCasse confirmed that some clean-up has begun. But with the thirteen acres, there is a lot to be done.

LaCasse stated City Manager Greg Lee and Planning Director Carolyn Braun had been working with Kimley Horn in relation to ideas for this park and housing development. The information provided in the agenda packet and on overhead photos is just a concept at this stage. Staff has a meeting tomorrow, March 16, with Kimley Horn to make some design changes and determine the next steps required for gaining permits from the DNR.

Upon review of the potential park development of this area, LaCasse referenced specific areas starting from the south end of the site and moving north. Staff would like to see a parking lot coming off Fourth Avenue. Trails would connect through the potential development onto the city's trail system. Thought has been given to dredging out the pond area in order to develop a canoe/kayak launching area.

Planning Commissioner Sandy Herrala stated she kayaks into that area and has never had a problem. Why do we need to dredge? LaCasse responded dredging would allow motorized fishing boats to access this area as well. Verbally, both the DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers have indicated their approval. Ms. Herrala was not in favor of either the dredging or allowing motorized fishing boats in here. She stated there is a great deal of wildlife back there. She was glad we are not putting docks and pontoons in here. Shoemaker agreed, stating she would prefer to keep it accessible to kayaks and canoes, non-motorized water craft. She felt that motorized boats might bring in a considerable amount of noise pollution, if not other problems, too. Ms. Herrala asked who would police this so that we do not have boats coming in there. Shoemaker felt the size of the entry could address that problem.

LaCasse went on to note that the concept plan included a playground within the conservation easement. The DNR would have to approve that. Staff feels placing it somewhere in the open area might be preferable. LaCasse stated the city received park dedication dollars from the nearby Volunteers of America (VOA) development and have an obligation to provide some sort of park amenity here, as well as for the benefit of the neighborhood in the area of Sixth and Grant. The old playground at Garfield Street nearby will be removed.

LaCasse went on to summarize that the rest of the development focuses on trails and areas of passive use. The concept plan indicates a boardwalk near the stone wall that would run the length of the property in an effort to get pedestrians close to the wall. Boardwalks are expensive and require significant, ongoing maintenance. While we would like people to interact with that wall, we are not sure how much access to it we will be able to provide due to wetland areas and its condition.

LaCasse noted that further north the existing trails are shown on the concept plan. As we clean out the woods, it will become easier for pedestrian access. While the concept plan does not show a restroom facility, there is water available on the site and sewer access nearby. The trailhead could be a good location for a restroom facility.

Shoemaker noted a significant break in the city's trail system at Fourth and Pierce, crossing the railroad tracks. There is no path on the left hand side of the road. We need to somehow let people know the location for pedestrian access in this area. LaCasse confirmed that the need for that trail connection has been discussed in the past and continues to be of significant concern to staff. There are no easements on

the west side of the road for a trail connection. Hokanson-Anderson Engineering has been hired to research that. A trail on the west side of 4<sup>th</sup> Ave would require a pedestrian crossing at the railroad tracks, which is expensive, and something for which the city would have to pay. Shoemaker stated that even some type of signage or arrows would help.

Chairperson Nelson asked the Planning Commission's interest on this topic. Don Kjonaas, Planning Commission Chairperson, expressed his appreciation for being invited to these Park Board discussions. The property east of the man-made pond and to the north is city-owned and zoned high density. There could be a lot of usage at this park. The Planning Commission's interest is to make sure the park fits the neighborhood. Not knowing the developers, the city should fit the neighborhood and not the developer. Chairperson Kjonaas stated lower density development is discouraged. They believe that property near the rail station is of high value.

Commissioner Herrala stated the previous developer who came in wanted to dredge that pond and put floating docks in. The Planning Commission all said NO. That developer also wanted to clear the vegetation to the river creating a pleasing site line. LaCasse also stated they wanted to push the trail closer to the river. The trail is located very close to the delineation of the Wild and Scenic River setback. Planning Commission staff liaison Chuck Darnell added that any activity within that area is very limited. We determined that where the trail is today, there will not be area for development west of there. Staff confirmed that a lot of the area is considered wetland.

The two board's Chairpersons communicated that the Planning Commission does not see the high density zoning for any future development changing. With it located so near the train station, there is a potential for people without children living in this owner-occupied development. With that the Park Board may have to reconsider its ideas for what we put in this park and how it is developed overall. Consideration will be given to including walking and running trails. LaCasse stated she would foresee putting in a sizeable playground, based on planned development, but unique and fitting the potential users. Past discussions have included fitness trails and other current trends. There is not a lot of open space due to the Wild and Scenic delineation. Commissioner Herrala asked if consideration had been given to placing a playground near the holding pond, or is there reason for not doing so. LaCasse stated there would be ways to work with that scenario.

Anderla raised the matter of the city possibly losing Rudy Johnson Park through a sale to a developer. The idea was that the Rudy Johnson neighborhood be able to safely access this Anoka Station Park. We will not see athletic facilities, such as ball fields and hockey rinks in this new park; but we need to create enough interest to draw people to it.

Mr. Kjonaas stated they would hope to see maximum density with minimum invasiveness.

Anderla added that new park will be interconnected with the existing city trail system. It might become a connecting corridor.

Shoemaker stated that area is used a lot by high school kids. We will want to make sure it is useable by them, too.

Blankenship applauded the City Council and Planning Commission for moving toward being proactive on the city's needs and choice of developers rather than allowing a project to be driven by the developer.

Nelson stated the biggest hurdle will be establishing a trail crossing at the railroad tracks.

Skogquist concurred, and he did not like the conceptual plan's playground location. As for park dedication funds, he asked staff how much we received from VOA, noting that it is going to cost the city a considerable amount to get a trail access across the railroad tracks, connect it to the new park, and install the sizeable play structure that staff described. LaCasse indicated she did not recall the exact amount received from the VOA, but knew it was based on a percentage less than the total amount per unit.

LaCasse added if Rudy Johnson Park goes away, we have to provide residents a safe and easy access to this new park location. Providing a trail connection past the Milk Factory area will involve getting an easement and striping a trail through there, which could require some diligent planning.

Planning Commission members left, with staff member Darnell remaining to discuss the three sites involved in potential Anoka Development Opportunities, the next agenda item.

LaCasse added that this is just a preliminary overview of the Anoka Station Park. Besides the Wild and Scenic Rivers delineation, there is an additional conservation easement that encumbers the property. Pretty much anything we do will require DNR approval.

**ANOKA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** – Associate Planner for the city, Chuck Darnell, presented three sites being considered for development. Darnell indicated he would be addressing City Council at its March 21, 2016, work session to discuss marketing. The Park Board considered how these will affect city parks.

Site #3, Rum River and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Anoka Station Park) – This potential development was just discussed by the Park Board and Planning Commission and involved the Anoka Station Park. Darnell indicated this would be the ideal situation developed as high density residential owner-occupied townhomes. The site could accommodate a couple hundred units at the most, but will likely be smaller than that. This area is zoned Transit Oriented Development and allows for same types of multi-family development, ideally condos and townhomes. The previous developer did not meet this vision, so we rejected it.

Site #12, 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Highway 10 (Rudy Johnson Park) – Darnell stated this site would suit office or commercial use due to its proximity to Highway 10. There still seems to be some interest in the site.

LaCasse stated any money generated from this property sale would go toward park development of the Anoka Station Park. We will lose the skating and athletic facilities. With the elimination of Rudy Johnson Park, there will be no park facilities for the neighborhood in the vicinity. It was noted that people may not use our parks as they used to in that young kids do not visit parks without their parents. Therefore, if we can provide a safe alternative route to the Anoka Station Park, it is hoped the Anoka Station Park would serve as a replacement for the Rudy Johnson Park neighborhood.

Nelson felt it could be weird locating an office site at that location. Darnell stated the site is currently zoned R-1 Single Family Residential. It could be market driven as well. LaCasse received confirmation from Darnell that the development of this property would include the parcel to the east on the corner of Polk Street and Seventh Avenue. That historic home was built in 1939. She too felt this could be an odd development choice.

Kallstrom thought there was more turnover with younger families. She and her family goes to the closest park. If not accessible, they do not go. If we want young families to move into the neighborhood, we have to provide something for them.

Shoemaker felt an office building at this location would create a huge traffic congestion and did not make sense in this neighborhood. Taking this park out of this neighborhood is not fair to Anoka.

Kallstrom asked why this park is not being used by the neighborhood and what can be done to address that. Blankenship added that if this property went from a park to a business, as a property owner, she would not be happy. Shoemaker felt it possible that if a business moved in, as a property owner she would move to another place and rent out her neighborhood home, which would make this a bad situation for the neighborhood and city.

Skogquist did not believe that the city's mindset is "Don't get rid of our parks ever". However, there are no parks in this area without crossing a road. Providing a safe connection to the new Anoka Station Park would be a positive step. However, Rudy Johnson Park, while small, seems to fit the needs of this neighborhood. Washington School playground has become a middle-school park. There is a playground but no ball fields or ice skating opportunities.

Kallstrom felt strongly that having a park in this neighborhood is a good thing.

Throne presented four points:

- The schools use this Rudy Johnson Park space for their physical education curriculums/activities.
- When he travels through a community, he likes to see parks and ball games going on. He would rather see open space rather than a development. Open space along a highway is good and has value for the community.
- There are some ball games played at this park. LaCasse stated not a lot; some T-ball and younger-aged girls' fast pitch.
- It seems like Anoka wants to develop every single piece of property. Some years ago people thought it of value to save undeveloped property for future generations. That is not being done any more. Blankenship recalled a point in time when the now Anoka Nature Preserve (then identified as the Rum River North Park) was an undeveloped green space and was the subject of considerable discord in an attempt to save it as such. Then that turned around, too.

Site #22, West Side of Green Haven, (Highland Park) – Darnell indicated this site is adjacent to the golf course and involves the development of the Greens of Anoka, proposed future plans along Highway 10, and reconstructing the area roadway. This is an opportunity for the city to acquire property near the golf course and vacant lands in order to market them for redevelopment. The area around Highland Park has been included in concepts as an area for redevelopment.

LaCasse indicated Highland Park is approximately 2.5 acres in size. Darnell added, with redevelopment, the park land will be pared down to approximately one acre.

Anderla stated this park is in much the same situation as that of Rudy Johnson Park as far as servicing that neighborhood. It is the only place they have to go other than trying to cross Highway 10. It is, in fact, worse than the Rudy Johnson situation. It is truly the only safe park for the neighborhood.

Skogquist concurred a drastically reduced park size, as is being proposed, is not sufficient for that neighborhood. It is totally inadequate.

Kallstrom stated there is information available that addresses the need for green space relevant to economic levels of households.

Blankenship asked if there is a developer involved in this instance. Darnell state, no, just a study done on the golf course area. Again, LaCasse confirmed this is part of the Greens of Anoka site.

Nelson felt perhaps any changes to Highland Park will be further along in the planning; just working on roads now. Darnell corrected that assumption and indicated we know what we are doing with the road, the development of which is in the immediate future.

Kallstrom felt strongly about the importance of providing an adequate park in this existing neighborhood.

Nelson advised members of the Park Board to attend this March 21 City Council work session and share your opinions with Council. It will be a good opportunity to share your views.

Darnell invited members of the Park Board to contact him if there is anything else he can respond to.

Darnell stated he will share the Park Board's concerns about this 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Highway 10 site with City Council. LaCasse indicated Council's work sessions are open to the public. All are welcome to attend this 5:00 p.m. meeting here in the City Hall Work Session Room. She will send out an e-mail to the Park Board confirming the time Council will meet. Darnell noted that this DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES item will be the only discussion at that meeting, and they will be discussing some twenty-eight sites throughout the city.

**PLAYGROUND SHADE OPTIONS** – Kallstrom brought up the matter of playground shade at the February 2016 regular meeting. As a result LaCasse provided shade options and their cost in the agenda packet. This information came from the Minnesota Wisconsin vendor. When taken down and stored in the

winter, they could have a life span of ten to fifteen years. Leaving them up will give them five to eight years. She estimated the umbrellas at the Aquatic Center last approximately five to six years due to the elements. Another option to address heat conducting amenities in our parks would be to upgrade and eliminate components in our parks as we refurbish things. They are out there, but at a cost.

Kallstrom acknowledged the high cost of these umbrella-type shade structures, and suggested the possibility of planting well-placed trees on the west side of these park and playground amenities to block some of the sun's heat.

LaCasse commented that purchasing a tree large enough to make a difference might be costly. In addition, trees have to be carefully placed in the public park so that they are not easily accessible for climbing.

Nelson stated he could see these umbrella-like shade structures being vandalized. Staff concurred.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Castle Field Plaques** – LaCasse referenced agenda packet information containing a layout of the Castle Field plaques for Willard J. Castle and Castle Memorial Field. These plaques are proposed for the left and right pillars of the entrance monument of Castle Field. The Castle family has seen them and has signed off on the text as shown. It has been suggested that the Castle Field Association (CFA) be recognized on a separate plaque. Staff is proposing such plaque be located inside the facility attached to the building somewhere, recognizing the ongoing partnership with the city. Nelson, a member of the CFA, confirmed that the organization is not looking for recognition as much as for presenting its purpose for public information. LaCasse felt this was a good opportunity to do that. Staff is currently looking at pricing on doing these plaques in bronze, stamped aluminum, or whatever other potential options. At this time staff expects these plaques to be 22 x 39 inches in size. Pricing for a bronze would be in the area of \$2,500. However, it may be determined that another color combination and material would work better. It is hoped to get these plaques in production and installed yet this year. We are looking at all options, and prefer to work with a local vendor to produce these plaques.

### **Winter Recreation**

- Skating rinks – LaCasse reviewed agenda packet information provided summarizing the skating rink attendance for each rink during the 2015/2016 winter skating season. This was not an average season, and definitely quite short due to weather being not conducive to outdoor skating.

Also as part of the Park Board's consideration, LaCasse noted the general information page re the skating season, as provided in the agenda packet. At the bottom of that page in red font, LaCasse proposed a change in warming house hours for the 2016/2017 season, based on this year's attendance. Monday through Thursdays, warming houses with attendant would be open from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; on Fridays, 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturdays, 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and on Sundays 12 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. School vacation hours would not change from the 2015/2016 season. Holidays and other non-school days in January and February would see the warming houses open 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. If approved, LaCasse would see that these new hours would be posted next season. It was the consensus of the Park Board to change the warming house hours as proposed by staff.

Anderla asked LaCasse if she could share skating rink attendance data at Rudy Johnson Park from the last five to six years.

Shoemaker asked if there could be an opportunity to somehow draw more people in, such as setting up a broomball league or tournament of some sort. LaCasse indicated it is possible. She will discuss the possibility with the person she plans to hire to assist with these types of activities in the Public Services offices. Shoemaker suggested working with the downtown bars and restaurants to set something like this up, rotating play throughout the skating rinks. It might be good for business during week nights, too.

- Sledding Hill

LaCasse showed pictures of the back side of the George Enloe sledding hill. Holmes and she propose to cut a smaller less aggressive sledding hill on that side for younger children. The west side of the hill becomes a sheet of ice and can be somewhat dangerous for small children. To accomplish this, city employees would have to cut out a couple of decent sized trees. The light pole has been moved already and will be available for both the soccer field and this smaller sledding hill. It was the consensus of the Park Board that staff proceed with this smaller sliding hill option as presented.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

**Anoka Boards/Commissions Appreciation Dinner – April 14** – LaCasse advised the board they should be receiving invitations to this April 14, 2016, Anoka Boards and Commissions Appreciation Dinner starting at 5:15 p.m. at the Green Haven Country Club. Please R.S.V.P. either to our Public Services office or to Pam Bowman of city staff by April 1. Erik Skogquist and Mary Blankenship both indicated they would be unable to attend. Mary Blankenship will be unable to attend the April regular Park Board meeting also.

#### **Other Miscellaneous**

- Shoemaker asked if there were any bike racks downtown. LaCasse verbally provided a list of several locations, including that there will be an additional one when the new parking lot at Second Avenue is constructed.
- Blankenship asked if anything is planned for the ANP buckthorn removal, following up on past years' efforts. LaCasse indicated she does not have a solid schedule, but believes Chris Lord with the Anoka Conservation District is planning to do another herbicide application again. Holmes felt it would actually be best if there was another hot, controlled burn. Staff will contact Chris Lord and discuss this further.

#### ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Development Opportunities Update
- Anoka Station Park Update
- Docks/River Update

In response to Nelson's query, Holmes provided a brief explanation of what he has to do to keep the Second Avenue holding pond cleaned and in working order. He cleans it approximately twice a year lately in that it becomes a huge garbage collection site.

LaCasse encouraged members of the Park Board to feel free to e-mail her at any time regarding something they might like placed on the meeting agenda or if they merely need information provided on a city-related topic. Agenda items are scheduled to go to the newspaper and QCTV by noon the Tuesday before the regular meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa LaCasse  
Public Services Administrator

Mava Mikkonen  
Public Services/Recording Secretary