



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF ANOKA CITY HALL
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Nelson, Joseph Anderla, Mary Blankenship, Dave Throne, and Ellen Ward

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

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

GUESTS: Ed Evans, 1186 Benton St., Anoka.

APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes or corrections to the February regular meeting minutes, a **motion was made by Throne, seconded by Ward, to APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 18, 2015, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS PRINTED.**

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

Ed Evans, 1186 Benton Street, Anoka, addressed the Park Board about buckthorn infestation throughout Mississippi River Community Park. He asked that the city not expand its park system until it cleans up the mess we have. Mr. Evans reported Anoka County utilizes the services of the Sentence-To-Serve (STS) inmates for various clean-up projects throughout the county. He felt that could be a good manpower resource to accomplish this buckthorn clean-up in Mississippi Park.

Mr. Evans also commented on the “shoddy” work, as he described, during the pouring of concrete for the new bridge abutments on King’s Island. He reported going out to the site with Councilmember Carl Anderson and saw holes in the concrete poured. He noted that metal posts were left in the concrete, which will rust in a few years and cause unsightly veins of rust running down the face of the rock work. Mr. Evans stated once they pour the tress/deck across, it will be too late to repair this. He commented that this \$1.4 million construction project is unacceptable.

Mr. Evans congratulated Lisa LaCasse on the 2014-15 skating rink operation. He worked a lot of hours as a rink attendant and felt they averaged about twenty-one people per day per rink when open. He felt the rinks were utilized well throughout the season.

In response to Mr. Evans’s comments regarding the King’s Island bridge construction, Lee stated that the contractors are not done with those bridges. It is recognized that there are a lot of pockets in the poured concrete, but they will fill those, paint it, and it will be fine. The project simply is not done yet.

Mr. Evens added that on the right hand side, the pour left a gap six to eight inches all the way up. Lee was confident even that will be corrected.

NEW BUSINESS

2014 Park Reservations Report



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In the agenda packet LaCasse provided a park reservations report from 2012 through present date 2015. This usage report does not include athletic field usage; just park rental. This had been a request of staff from the February Park Board meeting in that there was some question as to whether or not the parking situation at Peninsula Point Park affected usage. Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell. The information provided is merely a snapshot of park reservations.

City-wide Project Review

Lee indicated it is staff's desire to share an update on miscellaneous related park items throughout the city. Those included:

- **Riverboat** – A couple of years ago there were discussions about a possible riverboat enterprise that could affect Peninsula Point Park. The city's Economic Development Commission (EDC) authorized their staff liaison, Erik Thorvig, to send out letters to nine riverboat captains letting them know we are interested in pursuing this activity again. Lee stated he will e-mail the Park Board the information provided to him by Erik Thorvig.
- **Rum River Shores** – Lee reported the final plat for phase 2 was approved by Council last night (March 16, 2015). There will be a trailway on the north side of the property connecting to Seventh Avenue and then south to Bunker Lake Boulevard. The developer indicates he will grade the trailway in but will not pave it; that will be a city expense. The developer also changed the number of proposed lots from sixty-two (62) parcels to sixty-seven (67). The Park Board's proposed trailhead plans will remain the same as far as the parking lot and the location of the play equipment. LaCasse indicated that at the April regular meeting she will provide proposals from playground manufacturers for Park Board review. The \$75,000 available budget for playground expenditure is proving to be a limiting factor. Lee added that City Council awarded the trailhead parking lot project on February 17, 2015, as part of the 2015 Parking Lot and Alley Project awarded to Douglas-Kerr Underground LLC out of Mora, MN.
- **Kings Island and Mississippi River Trail** – Lee reported the bridge abutments were done in a rough pour. What with the mucky condition of the soils at the site, it is expected the contractor will be back out to continue work on the project at least by the first week of April at the latest. They expect to finish up the project this summer. Staff encouraged Park Board members to visit near the actual site along the Highway 10 access area to view a panel showing the end product.

As a follow-up to Mr. Evan's comment about buckthorn in Mississippi River Community Park, Lee stated the city does not have access to STS people; the county takes them. Buckthorn is a concern not only in this park but also at the Anoka Station Park and north toward the state hospital grounds. Last fall Lee asked Chris Lord with the Soil Conservation District to look into this. Lee will follow-up with Mr. Lord to work toward obtaining a grant to similar to that used for the Anoka Nature Preserve (ANP) to diminish/eradicate the buckthorn. It is found that the eradication process is more successful in the fall of the year so as to more easily identify this vegetation.

Anderla asked if we have a program in place to get this done without relying on Chris Lord. Lee stated the city simply does not have the manpower to do that. Anderla queried if the Parks Department is looking into other areas that is infested with buckthorn. Lee's response was we are aware of other locations. However, it is such a big job that having our city crews do it is simply not the most efficient way of approaching the situation. It is better to do it on a larger scale and then spray it.

- **Sunny Acres Dog Park** – LaCasse reported city crews have knocked down some vegetation for a trail in the Sunny Acre dog park area, but we still need to grade it. It has been witnessed that people have found the area anyway and are using it to exercise their pets.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2014/2015 Skating Rinks' usage

LaCasse referenced agenda packet information providing a report on this season's skating rink attendance per skating rink, season length, etc. This was a short season. It was also noted that approximately 1.3 million gallons of water was used to create and maintain skating rinks this year. Due to weather conditions, the rinks were established before Christmas and were lost twice more. We used half that amount of water during last year's skating season.

Archery Hunting Program – Hunter Feedback

LaCasse recalled that the board requested archery hunter feedback. As a result, the information asked for and received was provided in the agenda packet information. She summarized that, in general, there were no concrete findings noted. There were different experiences by different hunters. Park Board member Skogquist could not be present at this meeting, but provided comments via an e-mail dated March 17, 2015, re this hunting venture and future discussions about it.

Lee stated he feels it is the right thing to allow only Anoka citizens archery hunting privileges in the ANP and on King's Island. Non-residents simply do not have the same vested interest in city property. Nelson concurred, adding it is a benefit for our residents.

Throne stated he was pleased with the hunters' feedback. Archery hunters anticipated the general public would be in these parks at the same time they were. He did not feel it as great a concern for people using the parks as some people perceive. However, he felt there may still be room for further discussions about this with those having concerns.

Nelson stated he is still in favor of staff managing this program as they have. While city staff have not reported any requests received from the school district about hunting in the ANP, Nelson felt that park is a long way from the school and not really an efficient use of their time to utilize that park for school activities. He prefers that staff continue to manage the archery hunting program in these two parks, but the Park Board is here to work out any issues raised by the public, as long as people are still viewing this as favorable.

MISCELLANEOUS

Advisory Board Appreciation Dinner

Staff reminded the board that the city's advisory board appreciation dinner is scheduled for Thursday, April 16, 2015, at Green Haven. Invitations should be sent out in the near future. Members were encouraged to R.S.V.P., attend, and enjoy this annual event.

Park Board Membership Photo

A photo of the available Park Board membership was taken for appreciation dinner purposes. Another photo when the full board can be present will be taken at a future date. Anderla suggested the official photo be taken in front of a park sign.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- RFP for Anoka Nature Preserve play equipment
- Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) park plaques

With regard to the park plaques, LaCasse stated she is putting together information on cost and sign types, as well as dedication ceremonies.

Blankenship offered that long-time residents Charlie Sell and Jerry Jacob, especially Charlie Sell, were instrumental in establishing Akin Riverside Park and asked if they could be recognized posthumously. Nelson suggested staff request this of the HPC and get back to the Park Board about it. Blankenship added that perhaps Vickie from the Anoka County Historical Society might be a good contact about this as well.

Ward reported there has been some talk about recognizing Charlie Sell, but some feel it might be best to wait a length of time after his passing.

Other Miscellaneous

Anderla referred back to Lee's report that Erik Thorvig, staff liaison to the EDC, sent out letters to riverboat captains, expressing the city's renewed interest in this endeavor. He asked that someone please explain to him the reasoning for advertising the Peninsula Point Park building and boat slips for this use, especially without first consulting the Park Board. Lee explained that Thorvig was merely taking his direction from the EDC. Anderla was clearly put out that the EDC seems to have the right to offer-up one of our parks and turn it into a private enterprise without asking the Park Board first. Anderla went on to state that was the problem we had the last time this riverboat enterprise was considered. One of our premier parks was considered to be turned over to a

private business without even asking the Park Board's input. He again asked if the EDC has such rights over the Park Board.

Nelson commented that at this time we do not have the full picture and do not know who actually initiated this action i.e. letters to riverboat captains.

Lee attempted to explain that the entire Peninsula Point Park would not be turned over to a riverboat enterprise. It would still be available to the public. Blankenship suggested perhaps that was the reason Council pushed for the bigger parking lot. Lee stated with or without the riverboat, a bigger parking lot was needed. In fact, there is an opportunity to create additional parking at Peninsula Point Park on the river-side of the building, perhaps as an overflow area.

Anderla commented that the existing building at Peninsula Point Park is not big enough to serve that riverboat operation. He felt we need to have an understanding with Council and/or the EDC that it would be only correct protocol to have a conversation with the Park Board if a proposed action affects our parks. Anderla was not in favor of doling out park properties for private business.

As a matter of interest, Lee asked Anderla if he would be in favor of a riverboat utilizing park space if a captain showed interest in such a proposal. Anderla's response was: Yes, if their riverboat activity took place on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. His biggest complaint was that said letter was sent without proper coordination with the Park Board. Anderla confirmed his greatest issue is the impact to the park.

Throne queried who might be the residents who are in favor of a riverboat operation in Anoka because he knows a lot of people who are not in favor of it and of none who are.

Nelson stated that any new venture must first go through the discovery process to see if it would even work. While difficult sometimes, we need to be patient. Allow staff to gather all the information, then have a work session and hammer out our questions and concerns about that park. It is a process. He was confident it would eventually get to the Park Board.

Lee concurred, adding that knowing what the issues are early on can make all the difference, such as parking, etc.

Ward suggested this situation might be one the Chairperson's board should discuss.

Lee stated that up to three City Councilmembers had this riverboat project as their goal. Nelson stated that is acceptable in that it is their job to look at ways of bettering our community.

ADJOURNMENT

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

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Time of adjournment: 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Greg Lee
Public Services Director

Mava Mikkonen
Recording/Public Services Secretary