



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 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, Judy Botts, Mary Blankenship, Dave Throne, Erik Skogquist, Pat Walker, and Ellen Ward

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Steinbring

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

GUESTS: Scott and Jen Shoemaker, and Tom Blankenship

APPROVE MINUTES

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

8 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

None

NEW BUSINESS

Young Area Artists – LaCasse introduced area artists Scott and Jen Shoemaker. As noted in the agenda packet information, Mr. and Mrs. Shoemaker represent the Young Artists of Anoka pilot project and are scheduled to launch their program in 2015 by way of having young artists from Anoka High School and Fred Moore and Washington Middle Schools paint “Windows of Time” inside the Main Street pedestrian tunnel. These window-like scenes will depict Anoka-related themes.

Mrs. Shoemaker stated there are currently thirty-three kids signed up for the project. There is room for forty-two. Each young artist will be assigned a “window” within the tunnel on which to display the artists’ style within the given theme. It is their hope to eventually expand and get other projects in the downtown area. She hopes to help kids hone their skills and create an artistic treasure hunt around town.

Mrs. Shoemaker indicated she hopes to begin this tunnel project mid-June. For Riverfest they will be doing chalk art behind City Hall. Pete Turok, Anoka Chamber of Commerce, is reportedly discussing involvement in future events as well.

LaCasse explained in preparation for these young artists, the city will be painting the inside of the tunnel a light shade of blue to replicate the sky. We will also be adding additional and improved lighting throughout the tunnel. It is hoped that graffiti artists will respect the art of other youths and leave the tunnel alone. She expects this project to begin from the south end of the tunnel. A stair portion will include a list of sponsors/donations.

Nelson recommended this group take photos of the artists’ work as this project progresses to provide historic documentation.



When sealcoating the artwork was mentioned, LaCasse stated there has been some discussion about this being a rotating kind of canvas, so maybe sealcoating would not be appropriate.

Skogquist recalled there was a mural at the City Hall outdoor stairs during the 1990s. He did not remember it getting vandalized and felt this was a great project.

Anderla asked about a camera-based monitoring system. Lee reported there was one in the tunnel at one time, but it was vandalized. Anderla suggested having it replaced along with signage saying activities are being observed by the Police Department. Lee stated the city is currently reviewing its current and future security needs and have various camera locations in place. It would be fairly easy to point a camera toward the tunnel. He hopes to have them in/around park buildings as well. These security system plans are not budgeted for but could be included in the 2016 proposed budget.

Some years ago it was traditional for Halloween scenes to be painted on the windows of downtown businesses. They found the paint on the outside of the windows would run and was ruining the mortar of the buildings. Ward added that students also painted large sheets of paper and fit them in the business windows. The school district made the decision to stop that activity. Ward recalled that there are rolls of that paper in the Halloween room should this group want to use it. Mrs. Shoemaker felt the shop owners would like to see this art trend come back.

Nelson felt this was a great project and suggested putting up a sign explaining that these art works in the tunnel are being done by these young art students.

As for the Riverfest chalk work, LaCasse explained there are twenty-five sections of sidewalk between the Community Room in City Hall and the river that will be used for chalk art. There is still sidewalk access remaining for pedestrians.

Mrs. Shoemaker stated cable television and the ABC Newspaper wants to do an introduction to this art endeavor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

TH 10 Trailways – Lee presented a brief explanation of upcoming work planned for Highway 10 in the Anoka area in an effort by Anoka County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to make highway 10 more efficient. This will include a pedestrian safety improvement project in order to get pedestrians safely across Highway 10 at Fair oak and/or at Thurston Avenue. It is likely there will be a barrier placed down the middle of Highway 10 to discourage pedestrian crossing at Fair oak. This is expected to occur in the spring of 2016. There will also be a trailway on the north side of Highway 10 in the Verdale area. On the south side of Highway 10 there will be an expansion of a frontage trail for bike and pedestrian use. An ultimate plan shows a pedestrian overpass.

Lee explained the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has money to put toward a sidewalk from Fair oak, past Wright Tire, down to Church Street. This trail project has been in the city's budget for years and will be completed and paid for by MnDOT. Lee stated the down side of this is that eventually there will be a West Main roadway in this area, and this concrete trailway will be removed.

Lee stated the city is putting together its solution to this multi-traffic project and will present it to Anoka County and MnDOT.

Anderla asked if there will be cameras at the major intersections, fearing pedestrians will get out to the middle and find out they are trapped. Lee confirmed there will be no new cameras.

Peninsula Point Park Improvements Update – LaCasse reported the city is just starting to make progress with renovations to Peninsula Point Two Rivers Historical Park. The walls have been painted, but the floor improvements have been delayed due to the weather. The River Room is done, and the men's bathroom floor is done. The other three floors have been prepped. In addition we will be water sealing the exterior brick and replacing the flashing at the top of some of the walls. New door labels will

be made to replace the old ones. Bathroom partitions and hardware, as well as dispensers, will be replaced. The facility should look brand new.

Anderla asked about automatic door locks for the bathrooms. Lee reported that automatic door locks will initially be installed at the Akin Riverside Park bathrooms. Staff is currently looking into different options for those, as well as an overall security program. This will likely occur in the fall of 2015 or spring of 2016.

Upon review of the photos of recent vandalism at Akin Riverside Park, Anderla asked if it might be advisable to replace ceramic fixtures (sinks, etc.) with stainless steel. This is not the first time we have been vandalized. He recalled that Akin Riverside Park bathroom doors have been locked since May 9 or 10. LaCasse added they are not reopened yet. Crews are hoping to have it done by this weekend. Lee stated stainless fixtures are more expensive and would be possible, but our facilities would look institutionalized. Anderla felt as long as they were clean people would not care. He stated similar stainless steel fixtures are used in Excelsior; they were well lit, and did not look like a prison cell.

Throne stated he has seen stainless steel in other facilities, and it does not look so bad.

Anderla asked about placing a security system in our highly used parks. Lee stated anything can be done, but it all has associated costs. Anderla asked if a reward is being offered for the apprehension of these vandals. Lee confirmed there is a reward system in place.

Nelson was quite unhappy about our facilities being vandalized. When the public knows of this happening, it needs to be turned in. At the same time, the city must go with the type of facility we can afford.

Walker indicated he has some experience in the plumbing fixture line and felt stainless steel fixtures will cost several thousand dollars. As for security cameras in public areas, he does not like the idea. Nelson concurred. He does not mind the timed locks for the bathrooms, but he does not like the idea of cameras.

Anderla was not pleased that it has been ten days since that Akin Riverside Park vandalism, and the bathrooms are still locked up. If necessary, perhaps we should keep a supply of fixtures on hand so they can be replaced more quickly. Walker preferred that crews purchase from local vendors and have a faster turn-around on supplies. Anderla stated he would not be opposed to timed locks on the park bathrooms. Leaving restrooms open twenty-four hours a day is inviting vandals. However, ten days to have a public bathroom offline is too long. He did not appreciate having to have an outhouse sitting there. Ward concurred.

Anoka Nature Preserve Trailhead and Trail Update – LaCasse reported they are beginning to form the curb for the playground perimeters and expect them to be pouring before the weekend. Nothing is being done for the parking lot yet. She continues to work with Cre8play to get our playground selection under production.

The question was asked about a walking/jogging trail in the Anoka Nature Preserve (ANP). LaCasse responded that staff has marked with ribbon the secondary trail options through the ANP. Crews have not mowed these areas yet, awaiting Park Board comments. Tom Blankenship's diagram previously submitted pretty much reflects what is marked up there. Those ribbons are still in place should anyone wish to take a look.

Tom Blankenship, 1340 Oakwood Drive, discussed several areas of concern regarding secondary trails.

- There are ribbons on the north side, but Blankenship did not see anything done. LaCasse: Crews have not cut anything up there; awaiting Park Board input.
- There are existing paths out there. How about an extension of those around as was previously discussed. LaCasse: Those indicated are close to the river and way too wet. Cutting anything in that area would be difficult. Staff tried to stick with areas that could be maneuvered through more easily. To a great extent, we did rely on what was already visible. LaCasse indicated on Mr. Blankenship's map where the secondary trails were marked.
- Mr. Blankenship asked that some areas be cut to make adjoining trails. LaCasse: Staff disagreed with some he wanted and again reviewed the existing ribboned trails on the map.

- Mr. Blankenship asked about the Anoka County trail proposed to go through the ANP. While not yet settled, LaCasse showed on the map the location of the proposed Anoka County Rum River Regional Trail. The Park Board has previously reviewed and tentatively approved this proposed trail, as has City Council. Mr. Blankenship asked if it is mandatory that we have to give them that trail property and asked the city's position on this. Lee responded that City Council approved it and liked the county-proposed trail up there. It will connect up to a county trailway along Seventh Avenue just north and west of the ANP. This will allow the public to access a paved trail from Seventh Avenue at the northwest corner of the ANP to the Rum River and south. Throne stated he recalls that the Park Board preferred the shorter route and asked if Council knows that is our preference. Skogquist's recollection was the county trails map has been out for some time; even before we weighed in on it. This Park Board approved the longer trail route, as did City Council; then we studied it further. Since there is no money involved/available for this project at this time, nothing has happened.

Mr. Blankenship strongly disagreed, indicating that a lot has happened out there. Trails have been paved out there.

Nelson stated the Park Board and staff are gathering information. Mr. Blankenship's interests in the ANP is that he likes to run in the park. Others prefer to bicycle; while others access this park in wheelchairs. We can not do anything until we know what the county can do and when it will start. Many Park Board members prefer the shorter route into the ANP, liking the natural aspect of it. We still have to wait on the county to determine their intentions.

Mr. Blankenship felt very strongly that the City of Anoka owns this park, so why does the county get to tell us what trail they will pave through it. Nelson stated because the county is funding the construction of the trail. Mr. Blankenship recommended the city not accept their funds. While that trail is not paved yet, it will be. LaCasse noted that Anoka County has a master concept plan for their regional parks and trails. It is their desired connection through Anoka.

Considerable discussion ensued, with Mr. Blankenship quite adamant about his preference for unpaved trails. LaCasse reported she personally does not like to walk on the soft sand out there due to a bad back and has asked others using the park about their similar experience. She has not heard that people hate the graveled paving out there.

Mr. Blankenship disagreed. He also stated that handicapped people can travel the paved Z-area; why do they need to have access all the way around the park. Lee stated none of the trails are paved now. Mr. Blankenship felt the existing Class 7 up there is the first step toward that.

Nelson stated that City Council will have the final decision as to what will ultimately happen in the ANP. Mr. Blankenship declared he would discuss these issues with City Council. He then left the meeting room.

Lee and LaCasse asked the Park Board, as a result of Mr. Blankenship's passionate position about these ANP trails, should city crews mow these secondary trails or not. Skogquist stated the Park Board likes what we have previously discussed. LaCasse confirmed for the board that staff has done nothing in the ANP except mark proposed secondary trails with ribbons. Part of what Mr. Blankenship is referring to is a very wet area on the westerly side of that park. If we paved this, there would be clear zones with grass where people could run.

Nelson asked if Mr. Blankenship's position could be a Sierra Club point of view to do nothing up there. LaCasse stated that people she talks with in the ANP, where she walks on the weekends, have not indicated to her they do not like the gravel. They are more concerned about being able to walk their dogs off-leash, which should not be done in any case in the ANP.

Lee stated it should be the city's position to provide everyone an equal experience in the ANP, to the best of our ability. Nelson concurred. While he did not want to be insensitive to Mr. Blankenship's position, if we can accomplish a reasonable level of equity for our community, we should try.

Throne stated the more paved trails we put up there changes the aesthetics of the park; it becomes more urbanized. He, too, can relate to Mr. Blankenship's concerns. He, like Mr. Blankenship, likes skinny trails. However, he also understands the need to open it up more for others and their individual needs. The secondary trails as marked with ribbon are great. He feels staff definitely needs to cut them in. As for how much asphalt goes down in the future, that is a different conversation.

Lee added that before anything is asphalted in the identified Z portion of the trail, he would bring this topic back to the Park Board before it is done.

The Park Board concurred that city crews should mow those ribboned secondary trails.

Throne asked what type of community assessment we have done regarding trails in the ANP. Walker questioned whether a community assessment should be done. We can not give in to one interest group; the city must address the needs for the populous as a whole. Perhaps there is a standard somewhere for trail system traffic that might influence decisions. However, he was doubtful if Anoka County or City Council would change those regional trail plans now. Skogquist stated until that effort is funded and they are ready to build the regional trail, there is no point in getting into this. Walker agreed, adding at that point perhaps there might be an opportunity for public input.

LaCasse stated the trailhead and playground will draw people to the ANP and will determine how this gets used. People in general will change the use of this property.

Lee asked for Park Board direction to staff as to whether or not we should mow these secondary trails or let people trample them down. LaCasse indicated crews will use a sixty-inch brush mower. Throne felt that would be OK. Skogquist felt a five-foot trail is not that wide. If we find it is too wide, we can stop mowing and let it grow back. LaCasse stated people are already cutting in trails and using them.

Throne stated he has not been up there to look at the ribboned-trails because he thought the Park Board was going to get together as a group and view the area. Staff agreed this can still be done.

Lee stated we will hold off on cutting these secondary trails for now.

Castle Field Stadium Paving – Staff showed photos of the Castle Field complex where paving materials were placed to keep dirt from tracking into the bathrooms and building until we can complete phase three of this project. This was done for less than \$5,000.

Nelson expressed his approval of this paving, stating it makes a huge difference.

Throne asked how many pavers have been sold. While staff was not able to provide that detailed information at this time, LaCasse indicated that approximately \$72,000 has been raised so far to go toward phase three of the Castle Field project.

Lee explained the next step in phase three is to design the plaza behind the stadium. LaCasse is determining whether Anderson-Johnson is the right group to talk to about a concept sketch. It has been estimated at \$150,000 to do the memorial plaza. There is some thought that perhaps we should work with a landscape architect. We want to do this right. Lee stated the entire \$150,000 is not available in the budget. He asked if we should perhaps have it designed in 2015 and complete phase three in 2017. In 2016 there was to be an entrance monument board at Seventh Avenue and 43rd. This will have a WELCOME TO ANOKA sign, Castle Field Association, Castle Field, Anoka Area Ice Arena, and the previously used digital sign from City Hall. We hope to design this in 2015 and construct it in 2016. The ice arena has unofficially committed \$10,000 toward this project.

Skogquist and Botts spoke in favor of these plans, liking the ideal of providing digital information to the public.

Nelson acknowledged that individuals serving on the Castle Field Association (CFA) are very passionate about this portion of the project. He felt they may prefer to discuss this within the organization. Nelson, who serves on the CFA, will present this to the group at their meeting next week.

LaCasse noted there will be a perimeter fence to allow the CFA to charge a gate fee and provides additional flexibility. Staff confirmed a permanent perimeter fence will be constructed in 2016 and perhaps even some minor landscaping, bike racks, etc.

Nelson felt that waiting to complete phase three in 2017 is the only option. Being able to incorporate a few amenities earlier, say in 2016, would be of benefit. This will allow the association to raise some money.

LaCasse stated the city will be putting up a temporary fence for the July 3 ball games and festivities, which should help the CFA. It will be a decent looking hurricane fence using materials on hand.

Throne asked how the grass in front of the dugouts is holding up this year. Nelson reported there seems to be similar wear issues.

Lee stated the city hopes to work with a representative of the CFA on the entrance sign concept. We will then bring it back to the Park Board for consideration. Nelson stated he will bring this up at the CFA meeting next week.

MISCELLANEOUS

Arbor Day 2015 Franklin Elementary School – LaCasse reported that Tom Hammer, local landscaper and long-time Anoka resident, and Public Services Superintendent Mark Anderson made arrangements to plant a hackberry tree at Franklin elementary School April 24, 2015, to celebrate Arbor Day. Photos of the event were shown. With student involvement, this was a great success.

Bow fishing (Anoka Nature Preserve and Kings Island) – Lee reported this year our offices got a lot of requests for bow fishing permits. Apparently, there are some big carp at the dam. He has learned that any weaponry used within a city park requires a permit. Having people shooting bows behind City Hall is not acceptable. If they want to do that, it could be allowed in Kings Island (not off the bridges) and the ANP.

Sports enthusiasts on the board confirmed this is a fun activity. Walker added that the city should consider what to do with those dead fish. If allowed, we must supply disposal containers.

Nelson tabled this matter for now until staff finds out more about this.

Football Day Pictures – LaCasse reported that last Saturday, May 16, was football clean-up day. Photos were shown. Numerous projects completed were described. LaCasse stated it was estimated the city benefitted from approximately 350 labor hours from these youth volunteers on projects city crews simply do not have time to do. In turn, the football volunteers raised approximately \$10,000 for their program. During this event, Tom Hammer, as a participating volunteer, was supervising the planting of seedlings. He informed staff he would like to plant more milk weed and chokecherries to encourage butterfly activity in the area. The Park Board asked if Tom Hammer would come talk to the Park Board at a later date.

Urban Land Institute Workshop, June 22, 2015 – Lee informed the Park Board there will be an interactive workshop June 22, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. at Green Haven Golf Course and Entertainment Center addressing the demographic projection within the next twenty years. From a parks perspective, with twice as many people over the age of sixty-five, the city should be prepared for these kinds of changes, such as park-related activity. Informational only.

Akin Riverside Park Vandalism, May 9-10, 2015 – Staff reported the Akin Riverside Park bathrooms were seriously vandalized May 9, 2015, as discussed earlier in the meeting. The police report and photos of the damage were shown. Lee stated staff will look into the suggested stainless steel facilities and will talk with Park Maintenance Supervisor John Holmes tomorrow about getting these restrooms open as soon as possible. Lee encouraged members to call 911 if they ever see anything suspicious occurring.

Sunny Acres Vandalism – LaCasse reported late Friday or Saturday night vandals spun out with a vehicle on the grassy areas of Sunny Acres soccer fields, resulting in considerable damage. Photos were shown.

MISCELLANEOUS

Stone House – Lee reported there is a citizen in town who is a stone mason who has submitted an offer to reconstruct the stone house, charging only his time at a very reasonable price. Lee felt the city could not pass this up. He suggested perhaps this fall we could reconstruct the stone house, build the stone house bridge, and shot crete that.

Liquor Store Donations to Park Funds – Lee reported that in the past the Parks fund has enjoyed donations from the profits of the city's liquor stores. However, it is probable that both stores may be relocated in the future, so funds from their profits are being set aside for that future relocation rather than give them to the park fund.

Canoe Group during Riverfest – Lee reported there is a canoe enthusiast group proposing to do an eight-mile paddle up to Anoka's Freeburg Landing just north of City Hall as part of Riverfest activities. Walker expressed an interest in participating. Lee indicated he will provide him the contact information.

LaCasse stated she was contacted late last fall about a potential somewhat lengthy state aluminum canoe race. They were asking for permission and contributions from the city for this as a tourism kind of thing. This could bring in several hundred canoeists from around the country. More to follow as information becomes available.

Ball Field Conditions – Skogquist shared that he has received good comments about the John Ward softball fields as a result of the 2014 renovations. Everyone enjoys it.

Woodbury Property, No Trespassing Sign – Walker reported there is a NO TRESPASSING sign facing north on the north end of the Woodbury property. He feels it should be turned around. He finds it offensive.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Review Bi-annual Report to Council

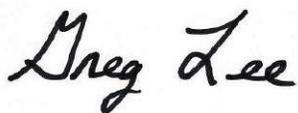
ADJOURNMENT

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

8 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Time of adjournment: 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Greg Lee
Public Services Director

Mava Mikkonen
Public Services Secretary/Recording Secretary