



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2015 – 7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL WORK SESSION ROOM OF ANOKA CITY HALL
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Nelson, Mary Blankenship, Dave Throne, Erik Skogquist, and Dave Steinbring

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Anderla, Pat Walker, and Ellen Ward

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

GUESTS: Paul Thomas and Jeff Weaver

APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes or corrections to the last meeting minutes, a **motion was made by Blankenship, seconded by Throne, to APPROVE THE JUNE 16, 2015, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS PRINTED.**

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

OPEN FORUM

None

NEW BUSINESS

Judy Botts’s Resignation from the Park Board – Lee announced that effective August 6, 2015, Judy Botts has resigned from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Lee has asked the City Clerk to advertise for this vacancy.

Livin’ Foundation/Total Country BOB FM Fundraiser Request, September 19, 2015 – LaCasse referenced agenda packet information regarding a request by Paul Thomas to be allowed to hold a fundraiser September 19, 2015, at John Ward Park to raise money for his non-profit organization, Livin’ Foundation, an awareness foundation focusing on suicide prevention. The event will include live music, a kickball tournament, and the Lions Club selling beer and food from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. LaCasse has recommended utilizing John Ward Park noting there are fewer residential homes in that neighborhood than in other park areas. Mr. Thomas has applied for an event permit through the City Clerk’s office.

Blankenship asked that the homes surrounding John Ward Park be notified of this event ahead of time. LaCasse indicated that staff would do so. This will be a family-friendly event open to the public.

Skogquist asked how this event is associated with the one in the downtown Anoka area on that same day from 2:00 pm to 5:00 p.m. Mr. Thomas explained in his e-mails that he will be combining forces with his BOB FM radio station and Dahlheimer Beverage for a similar but adult-oriented event in the bars of downtown Anoka. He will be encouraging his John Ward guests to head over to downtown Anoka after 2:00 p.m. It is likely he will have bands at both the kickball tournament and the downtown locations. Mr. Thomas is still working out details for the downtown event with the City Clerk. That event will be separate from the one at John Ward Park.



Upon discussion of the kickball tournaments, Mr. Thomas stated he hopes to put together at least eight teams for a standard tournament bracket. He was unsure yet if John Ward field number three will be viable. LaCasse stated city crews will drag and prepare field number three and make bases available.

Mr. Thomas stated his website, lavin'foundation.org, is already advertising this John Ward Park event. He plans to put the stage and music in the shelter number one area so it faces into the park, the fields, and cemetery and away from residential property. He has already contacted Mt. Olive Church about this. LaCasse offered to check on the availability of electrical outlets near shelter number one.

There being no further discussion and no voiced opposition to this John Ward Park event, a **motion was made by Steinbring, seconded by Throne, to RECOMMEND CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL OF THIS LIVIN' FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER TO BE HELD IN JOHN WARD PARK SEPTEMBER 19, 2015, FROM 10:00 AM TO 2:00 PM.**

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Brisbin Street Bike Trail Pilot Program – Lee provided an overhead map of the current trailways throughout Anoka. It was noted that some of the trails are on-street. The 2015 Street Renewal Project (SRP) in the Slabtown area of Anoka will provide a trailway on the south side of Pleasant and on the west side of Wingfield. In 2016 the SRP will be in the Brisbin and Adams Street area. Lee was hoping to do a pilot program in this neighborhood and sign the south side of Brisbin NO PARKING for the purpose of providing a recognizable bike/pedestrian trail through the neighborhood. We would not widen the existing streets out. Lee has received a letter from neighborhood resident Richard Mussell recommending an on-street bike trail in this neighborhood. In preparation for this 2016 SRP, letters would go out to residents informing them of this proposed on-street bike trail. When we meet with them in November or December for the street project, we will ask them their opinion about the bike trail.

Lee stated that since the initial correspondence with Richard Mussell, he has since received a follow-up from him. We will not be widening those streets during the SRP project. He understands if we designate one side a bike trail that side will be signed NO PARKING. Lee felt he would like to have a follow-up conversation with Mr. Mussell and then bring it back to the Park Board. Lee's intent is to set it up so we can have a bike trail available in the overall city park system.

Throne asked if there would be bike trail designations on both sides of the street. He believes in riding bike with traffic. Lee stated that bike trails are evolving. Typically you would want to have the street a little wider if you have a bike trail on it. Throne noted that in Iowa, they do not have designated bike lanes; but they do have a graphic of a bike and arrows down the middle of the street. This seems to increase awareness of bike routes for everyone. Lee concurred that could be a good solution. Throne stated he would try to take some pictures during his next visit to Iowa. Nelson and Blankenship liked that concept.

Anoka Station Park/City Actively Marketing Rudy Johnson Park Property/Potential Park Relocation – Lee noted City Council's July 27, 2015, worksession information provided in the agenda packet. This included information confirming the city is actively marketing the current Rudy Johnson 611 Polk Street property. Several months ago, Lee reported there was a party interested in purchasing that property. That has since fallen apart. However, the property is still being marketed. Lee stated it is the city's position that a park at this location adjacent to Highway 10 might not be the highest and best use of that property.

Lee asked if that park would be relocated, how would we make that transition. He reported staff is currently working with the Kimley Horn Landscape Architectural Firm to start planning a new park off Fourth Avenue on the west side and north of the railroad tracks. A concept plan of this park was originally put together by Harold Skelbostad. It is possible we could move Rudy Johnson over to this site; five blocks away from where it is currently. We would be taking that park off the highway and putting it on/near a river.

Lee asked: If we were to develop a park in this Fourth Avenue area, what are some of the amenities and features the Park Board would feel is appropriate for this new location. Currently, there is a marina-type of landing area that has potential. The city is looking to upgrade this. We are looking to get a permit from

the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to excavate sediment from that waterway. If the city ever wants to promote a canoe/kayak rental program, we would then have a facility available for that.

Lee discussed other possible features, which might include standard play equipment. A developer near the Fourth Avenue future park area is creating cottages/townhomes for active empty-nesters. He wants a nearby park upgraded with amenities. With the Volunteers of America development nearby, perhaps it is time to consider providing some adult exercise equipment along the trail. Having a park along Fourth Avenue lends itself to that. We could potentially provide exercise equipment all along the Rum River trail.

Throne asked if staff has checked with other communities to determine how successful something similar has worked for them; how the equipment has held up and how much it is being used. Lee confirmed he has not checked with other cities.

Skogquist stated he liked the idea of doing something more unique; providing a different type of park. This Fourth Avenue area has a more tranquil atmosphere. Other than the train, it is pretty calm over there. He did feel it important to have some sort of structure there; a stopping/resting point. However, there is some concern with accessing or getting to this Fourth Avenue Park. It would be a different type of park. With Rudy Johnson Park relocated, there would only be the play equipment at Washington School for that neighborhood.

Councilmember Jeff Weaver stated that City Council asked the school district to provide play equipment for this sixth grade campus. It was recognized as the focal point of the neighborhood.

Skogquist and Throne expressed concern for not losing the park feel in the Polk Street area if we relocate Rudy Johnson Park. That is an easily identifiable destination.

Steinbring asked what other types of activities or amenities could go in to the Fourth Avenue Park. How can we promote that further. When he asked if juvenile play equipment will be worked in to the park, Skogquist did not feel there needed to be anything fancy. Just enough for some interest and as a stopping point. Steinbring felt it is somewhat dangerous to travel along Seventh Avenue and under the railroad overpass to get to the current Rudy Johnson Park. He queried how far away from that location is Washington School and its play equipment. It was determine it is approximately three to four blocks south.

Weaver stated the Fourth Avenue area is spectacular. He felt the lagoon is very unique and is actually quite deep.

Lee reported staff has talked with the Anoka Conservation District about the invasive species found in this Fourth Avenue area. It is hoped we can work out a plan with the conservation district to get rid of the buckthorn and other invasive species found there. The plan would be to move the trailway long the river and interact with the river. One unique feature at this site is the existing stone wall along the river. It was believed the administrative personnel of the former Anoka State Hospital lived on these grounds and kept a beautifully manicured property/lawn all the way down to this stone wall along the river. Mr. Weaver assumes this wall was probably built out of field stone and constructed by those living at the state hospital. He hopes to research this further. He felt the possibilities for water features would be very unique and wonderful. Imagine the high school students participating in sculling and rowing.

Lee stated there will have to be discussions about whether the city's snow dump would remain at this Fourth Avenue site. Nelson suggested the parking lot be used as a snow dump, letting the black asphalt help to melt the snow. Lee added that when the snow is totally melted in the spring, crews could hand-pick debris or even use the street sweepers to clear it.

Nelson asked about the cost to dredge the silt from the lagoon. Lee estimated it at \$50,000. We will be working with the DNR to clean that up.

Nelson stated this Fourth Avenue area for a park is great, but he did not want to see it clutter too much with a lot of man-made products. He agreed it would be a great landing for canoes and kayaks.

Lee reiterated that he is asking the Park Board what type of features they might want at this Fourth Avenue park site, as well as the board's thoughts, concerns, and guidance with this project. Nelson stated the biggest concern is how to get there, including the safety aspect of crossing the railroad tracks. Lee stated the plan would be to put the trail all on the west side of Fourth Avenue. In 2017 we hope to have the trailway from the Milk Factory on Fourth Avenue all the way up to this park site, keeping the trail on the west side. He felt it will be necessary to provide gates across the railroad track, knowing they will be expensive. Nelson felt with this part of the trailway completed, it will truly enhance the city's trail system.

With the city's trailway being discussed, Mr. Weaver commended the Park Board and staff on the nearly completed Mississippi River Trail in the Kings Island area. He reported there are so many people using it and enjoying the beautiful tree canopy. This was a job well done. Staff noted the bridges are not yet completed and the trail needs to be paved; perhaps in about two weeks. Lee added there are some channel areas we need to address yet, also.

Steinbring reported a man came in to his business who was a guru of disc golf. He stated that eighty acres of unused land by the state hospital would be ideal for a disc golf venue. Mr. Weaver stated he believes that state land is being set aside for a future Minnesota National Guard Armory, moving them from downtown Anoka. They hope to make it more of a campus/education system. Lee felt that should take up at least twenty acres. Steinbring added this disc golf expert said he could see establishing a few holes along the river as an active park. It would be minimally invasive. Lee noted the disc golf in Mounds View was incredibly successful. Steinbring added that a pay-to-play course could pay for its maintenance. Skogquist thought disc golf might be a future Olympics event. Mr. Weaver thought it was also recognized as a letterable sport. The convenience of it being located right next to the high school was a positive factor.

State Hospital Picnic Shelter Frames – Staff provided overhead photos of the steel picnic shelter frames which the State of Minnesota is proposing to get rid of from their property adjacent to the state hospital grounds near Fourth Avenue. If they do not want them, the City of Anoka does. Anoka County approves. Uses for these sturdy frames may be at the Anoka Station Park or maybe at the Anoka Nature Preserve.

Nelson stated wherever a shelter is built from this material, it should be where people can see it and see what is going on inside it. Throne stated he sees this shelter as a rest-stop for a community walk or bike ride, similar to the train station park. Nelson suggested George Green Park might be a great location for it. Lee stated city crews will remove this shelter frame once we get the go-ahead. For now, he wanted the Park Board to start thinking of possible uses for it.

Highland Park Concept Plans – Lee reviewed packet information regarding the Highland Park concept plans and overall future development in this area. During this process, it is probable that Highland Park will be shrunk down in size, leaving the play equipment. The Park Board was asked its position on this process. LaCasse added it is likely that by the time this area is developed, the existing play equipment will need to be replaced.

Steinbring noted that Concept C shows the existing hole #16 way too close to the townhomes, especially for golfers who might slice their swing.

Lee stated with the realignment of Green Haven Parkway, the city liquor store in this area will eventually be relocated, possibly to the former Vineyard Restaurant location at the intersection of Thurston Avenue and Highway 10.

Blankenship asked which concept would be the least disruptive and save the most park area. She thought the 71 unit homes concept (Concept B) would be the least desirable. Lee stated that in terms of impact to the park, all concepts are about the same. Nelson confirmed with staff that the Park Board input on these concepts are with regard to the effect on the park only.

Skogquist stated he would hate to disrupt the play feature. This is a very disadvantaged neighborhood, and he does not want to take away their park. Nelson concurred.

Castle Field Improvement Plan – Lee explained that the next stages of the Castle Field Improvement Plan is expected to take place in 2016. This will involve erecting an entrance monument and reader board sign. A committee is being put together with representatives from the Castle Field Association, the Anoka Ice Arena, and city staff member Mark Anderson to come up with an entrance monument design. Lee indicated meeting dates have not yet been determined, but he will find that out and let the Park Board know. They should begin in September 2015.

Also included in this final stage will be a perimeter fence and tree plantings, if there are funds left over. The fencing will be black and vinyl coated like the downtown area cyclone fence. This will be containment fence, not a security fence. It is currently planned to be five-feet in height with spindles. If the board wants a taller fence, the \$50,000 budget for this phase will not cover it. Steinbring discussed the fence at the third base coaching area, stating if that could be an eight-foot fence, it would be helpful. LaCasse stated she could talk about it with design architect Geoff martin who is putting the phase three decorative fence plans together. Staff has budgeted \$50,000 based on a five-foot fence. Nelson stated he did not think we need to go any higher than that.

Steinbring asked if there were gates in the plans. LaCasse indicated she would see what that will cost, especially by the entrance monument. Nelson added he did not think we should have a taller fence on the perimeter. Just keep it looking good. It was better to have tournaments for people to flow through with a gate and be able to contain people.

LaCasse stated she will bring these phase three plans to the Park Board prior to construction.

As an aside, Nelson and Steinbring informed staff there is condensation onto the concrete from the water pipes in the storage room at Castle Field. LaCasse stated she would have it checked out.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Park Improvement Updates

- Loch Lake – Lee reported on the golf course's Loch Lake storm water modification project. He indicated the city is looking at increasing the elevation of fairway #2 and #4 so we can put additional water into Loch Lake. The redevelopment of adjacent Slabtown will direct storm water runoff into this lake. These improvements to the lake will set it up for the future townhome developments and a future maintenance facility to the northeast of this property. It will also make fairway #4 more playable.
- Main Street Tunnel Art – LaCasse reported they held a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Main Street tunnel recently to celebrate the art work/murals completed by the middle school aged youths. There were approximately 100-150 people in attendance to view the 38 window-framed works of art. The new LED lights in the tunnel made a huge difference to this project and pedestrian use of the tunnel. Lee stated these lights will be on in the tunnel 24/7. LaCasse stated she has talked with art leader Jennifer Shoemaker about letting elementary school kids do a water/aquatic type of mural on the pool wall. Nelson asked what happens if these paintings get tagged. LaCasse stated if completely destroyed, the city will have to paint over it. All concurred this pedestrian tunnel has become a great attraction. LaCasse added that Mrs. Shoemaker plans to come back and paint clouds on the tunnel ceiling now that the lights are installed.

Steinbring asked if we can paint the pedestrian bridge on Fourth Avenue. Lee confirmed that no, that will not be possible because that has a lead-based paint on it.

- Peninsula Point Fencing – LaCasse presented photos taken of the new fence railings between the Peninsula Point Park patio and the playground. In addition, the new partitions for the women's bathroom has arrived and will soon be installed. Different dispensers for toilet paper, etc. will be going in also. We are nearly done with interior renovation fixtures at this park.
- Polk Street Overlook – LaCasse presented before and after photos of the Polk Street overlook. Broken concrete and rusty fence barriers were removed. Added was block work for the retaining wall. A new concrete pad/walkway was also put in by outside contractors. Otherwise, all the

work was done by city crews. They started the last week of July and finished installing benches today, August 18, 2015. Crews were able to use recycled City Hall block, but the cap is new. LaCasse went on to report that the next thing we hope to do is the wooden railing bordering the trail, replacing it with the same style of black railing as was installed at peninsula Point Park. Crews also cleaned up the shrubs.

- Mississippi River Trail – Staff noted, as discussed earlier in the meeting, the Mississippi River Trail is nearly completed. The park is widely used, and seems to be a huge success.
- Anoka Nature Preserve/Trailhead – LaCasse reported staff rerouted the trail by the trailhead so now it comes out at the parking lot. This is pedestrian only; not for vehicles. A photo of the relocated Emmans bench was shown. It is now located as you enter the woods and is adjacent to a bluebird house. The bench is in the shade, sits on a poured concrete pad, and there is a lovely view from this bench site.

LaCasse also reported city crews and staff are again trying to keep on top of the rope swing issue that is constantly being installed at the Nature Preserve. On August 17 whoever is installing these rope swings actually cut down a tree next to the rope swing tree to improve access. Two weeks ago there was an injury out there, whereby, someone ended up with a broken leg. LaCasse fears the next step for staff will be to cut the tree down where the rope swing is placed. These kids are hanging a rope on a dead tree in a totally unsafe environment. She is concerned for the city's liability. They are entering the river at a location where the water is only waist deep.

Skogquist was not in favor of cutting down trees to stop rope swing activity. The kids will simply keep moving the rope swing down to another tree. We can not cut them all down. It will not stop them.

- Riverfront Park Picnic Table/Grill Added – Lee presented a photo of a recent picnic table and grill addition to Riverfront Park in the area of the boat slips above the dam. People seem to gather in this quiet area, so staff decided to place these select amenities in this area for the public's use. Also, so they stop using the decorative park logs as a place to set their personal grills and run the risk of damaging them.

MISCELLANEOUS

Further Discuss Riverboat Enterprise Details – Lee recalled that Park Board member Joe Anderla had asked last June that the riverboat letter to captains be provided. See agenda packet for this information. Because Anderla was not able to attend this meeting, Lee recommended this item be placed on the September agenda for further discussion. Anderla's telephoned-in comments were provided for the Park Board's review.

Minor discussion ensued, with Lee suggesting how a bank of parking stalls could be reserved for the public during riverboat excursions. It would be unlikely there would be more than 149 passengers on a riverboat. Over that number, then the Coast Guard rules apply. Members suggested ways in which riverboat passengers would obtain a parking stall: Put up signs exclusive to the public, if they buy a ticket for the riverboat they get a parking sticker, pre-pay for parking, buying a ticket gives them a parking stall and have parking attendants check this, or paint parking stalls designating public or riverboat parking.

Lee agreed with Anderla's position that people wanting to use the park should find it still open to the public. Nelson stated he just wants to make sure Peninsula Point park is not being repurposed for riverboat operations. Lee stated all these details would be negotiated with a riverboat operator. We will have to look at it as not only an attraction for Anoka, but also a money-maker for the city.

2105 Archery Hunt – LaCasse referenced agenda packet information relevant to the 2015 archery hunt. There are a few changes from 2014: There are a series of no discharge zones. She attempted to be very clear about the trails and the fifty-foot clear zones. As in 2014 the 2015 archery hunt is open to residents of the City of Anoka only. Hunting will take place on both Kings Island and in the Anoka Nature Preserve. Applications and information have been put on the city's website and are available to the public.

City Manager Tim Cruikshank's Resignation – Lee informed the Park Board that City Manager Cruikshank has accepted a position with the City of Golden Valley. As a result, Lee's duties will change in that City Council named him Interim City Manager. This will likely result in more park-related responsibilities falling to Lisa LaCasse. Lee was congratulated on his promotion.

Other Miscellaneous

- Downtown Flower Baskets – Blankenship extended high praise to whoever is responsible for maintaining downtown flower baskets this year. LaCasse stated employee Colin Hogue and his crew have been in charge.
- Cemetery – It was noted there has been a large amount of cemetery business recently, especially in July.
- Vandalism – Lee reported there has been a lot of vandalism, specifically at this time of year just before school starts. He encouraged any Park Board member who sees something that just does not look right to call 911.
- Akin Riverside Park Locks – Lee reported that tomorrow we are installing electronic locks at Akin Riverside Park. They will open at 6 a.m. and close at 11:00 p.m. This will be our test park to see if this system helps. Skogquist noted there are what seem to be transients hanging out at Akin. This is not conducive to enjoying the park. Lee stated the city has budgeted for additional city security for 2016. We will probably start implementing some security plans yet this fall.
- Stonehouse – Lee reported the stonehouse has been graffitied four times recently. The planned restoration project is scheduled to be done yet this fall. We will be working with a local stone mason. We hope it will look much like the 1920s photo the city has, without the steps leading to the top.
- Transients – Staff confirmed that it seems Anoka has an influx of urban explorers who just want to hang out, especially in our parks. The Police Department has stepped up to address this. We have to give them some time to get the job done.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – Further discussion of the Riverboat activities in relation to Peninsula Point Park.

ADJOURNMENT

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

5 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.

Time of adjournment: 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Lee
Public Services Director

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