

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Parks Commission July 15, 2019

Members Present: Commissioners- Nightingale, Olinger, Schumacher, and Weeks

Absent: Ames, Mayek, and Zeno

Staff Present: City Planner- Prchal, Public Works Director- Powers

The meeting was called to order by Weeks at 6:30 PM.

Announcements

Weeks added a public comment section to the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

Commission motioned to pass the agenda.

Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

a) June 17, 2019

Schumacher motioned to approve the June minutes, seconded by Olinger.

Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Susan Dunn, 11018 Upper 33rd Street North. She raised concerns about the proposed use change at Sunfish Lake Park. She would like an EAW/EIS review of the proposed extreme mountain bike trail at Sunfish Lake Park. She researched other parks in the area and the only cities that allow mountain biking in their parks are Oak Park Heights and Woodbury. She would like an environmental review done to fully understand how this mountain bike trail would impact the environment at Sunfish Lake Park. She raised concerns that this proposed trail is in violation of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan which states that Sunfish Lake Park prohibits mountain biking on trails. She questioned if the intent is to change the use of Sunfish Lake Park from a nature preserve to a single purpose mountain bike trail park. Her final comments were that the Commission needs to be cautious when looking into a change like this. Olinger asked for clarification on what is meant when talking about "high impact." Mrs. Dunn explained that it refers to the speed, intensity, and number of people performing the action.

Nature Center Patio Request

Prchal presented on a request for the Nature Center which is asking to put in a 500 Sq. ft. patio.

The nature center has lease agreements with the City for the patio that states they can go ahead with the project with approval from the City. It also goes into detail about what it would cost to remove the patio, the plan has budget forecasts for what removal

would cost. \$3-\$4 per Sq. ft. for a total of \$20,000 for removal of the patio. Patio will be south of the Nature Center. The City had recommended for the Nature Center to clean up the site, erosion control, and add in a rain garden. Which the nature center has done recently. City staff recommendation stays the same, recommending for approval. At the last meeting the Commission wanted someone from the Nature Center to clarify some items such as: ADA Accessibility, will the Nature Center install pervious material and what is the master plan for the nature center.

Tony Manzara, Director of the Nature Center. He gave a presentation to clear up some of the questions regarding this proposal. The overall vision and mission for the nature center is in the lease agreement. They removed buckthorn on July 13th to clear up the land and have installed a rain garden. Construction status presented showed that they were allowed 3 years to complete the building process and received Certificate of Occupancy in 1.5 years. He touched on the ADA requirements stating that in the building codes elevators are not required in buildings under 3 stories tall or 3000 Sq. ft. per floor. The Nature Center is 2900 Sq. ft. per floor. They build a stairway with low pitch making it easier to climb and the restrooms are ADA compliant. They are considering an ADA accessible path from the front door up the hill on the outside of the building. He explained the "major" alterations that the Nature Center has been considering. The patio is one and the company that poured the concrete for the center has donated the concrete for the proposed patio. They cannot ask the donator to make the patio with a pervious surface because that is not why it was donated. They also do not want to create something that will require constant maintenance. Nature Center has considered a seating area on a hillside like an amphitheater style and an expansion of the Nature Center and would bring to the Commission if they decide to pursue that plan, but not planned in the near future.

Weeks asked if Mr. Manzara's position is if he doesn't have to go through the City for these changes. Mr. Manzara clarified that his position is that this is debatable if it is a "major" alteration or not, and he would bring changes to the City. According to the lease agreement, Mr. Manzara interprets it as if the Nature Center wants to alter anything on the site they will go to the City and ask if it is okay. Manzara had wanted the \$20,000 in escrow back for the Patio, but it was not approved. So he gave the Lake Elmo Bank stock and would be willing to give the City this stock if the patio would be torn down. Weeks also asked about a proposed amphitheater and if that is the Nature Center's plan. Mr. Manzara said that they have considered a seating area on a hill for lectures, but it would not host any big events. Weeks asked if picnic shelters, playgrounds and overlook shelters were in the plans. Mr. Manzara said those are not. Mr. Manzara stated that the purpose of the demolition escrow was so that it would not be a burden on taxpayers. Weeks wanted to make sure that the Nature Center would be able to continue being self-sufficient in funding itself in the future.

Olinger had a question about the lease agreement and asked Prchal if Mr. Manzara did have to come to the City for permission to build this patio. Prchal said people can interpret the lease agreement differently, but it was mutually decided that this request did need to come before the Parks Commission. Schumacher asked who decided that. Prchal said that it was the City Councils decision to have this request come to the Commission.

Schumacher was curious because he said he has worked with Nature Centers before and they always have upgrades and he wants to know if the Nature Center is required to come to the Commission for every improvement. Prchal said this is different than adding a birdhouse because a concrete slab is permanent and that is why it had to come to the Commission.

Olinger motioned to recommend approval of the patio at Sally Manzara Nature Center as presented. Seconded by Nightingale.

Olinger discussed that she thinks the cost to remove the patio is a little high, and she does not want to increase the escrow, but she thinks it would fit great with the Nature Center.

Motioned passed 3-1. (Weeks- nay)

Review of the Subdivision Code-Park Dedication and Trail Connection

Prchal recapped that this issue was visited last month. He explained that the City had recently approved two new zoning districts, being the Mixed Use Commercial and the Mixed Use Business Park. These two classifications are not covered in the park dedication section so staff are looking to insert these two sections into the code. Park dedication fees must be established by ordinance or a fee schedule that meets the requirement of state statute. Prchal references the League of Minnesota Cities for deciding how to set these fees. He showed a table with the existing parks dedication requirement that have categories for fees at 10%, 7%, 4% and fees that are set by a Council Resolution which are \$4,500/acre. The proposed changes would be to combine categories and average percentages for the rural districts creating a 10% and 5% fee. Staff is recommending increasing the \$4,500/acre to \$5,000/acre for commercial land based on research of other cities. Weeks asked if \$5,000 was a little low compared to what other cities have and wanted to know if Lake Elmo could propose a \$10,000/acre fee. Prchal said he would want to talk with other cities first to see how exactly they get their fees before a big increase like that.

Prchal moved on to the second part of the recommendation which is the issue of trail connection. Staff is recommending new language to the park dedication section of the code. New language would include: "To receive the 25% credit for a trail, there must be a public trail connection to the larger Lake Elmo or Washington County trail network. If the proposed trails are not able to connect to existing trails, they must be installed in a way that would allow them to connect to future trails as additional infrastructure is established." Staff is recommending the combination of OP Development, RR and AG, as well as including the RS section to create a rural charge.

Schumacher said that the last sentence of the language is very vague. Prchal said that it is that way so that if someone builds in an open area, the City can have a stub setup so they can connect the trail.

Weeks questioned that if the 25% credit could be changed to just say "receive the credit." And he would like it to say that the trail needs to be a "through" connection.

Olinger suggested changing the last sentence to say that "If the proposed trails are not able to connect to existing trails, they must be installed in a way that would provide a connection to future trails as additional infrastructure is established."

Schumacher had a question if the developers just pay cash, can that cash be distributed into a bulk fund and used for other things or if it dedicated back to the specific fund. Prchal clarified that all fund collected are put back into the park dedication fund specific for park development activities.

Prchal read the updated amendments to the trail connection language: "To receive credit for a trail, there must be a through public trail connection to the larger Lake Elmo or Washington County trail network. If the proposed trails are not able to connect to existing trails, they must be installed in a way that would provide a connection to future trails as additional infrastructure is established."

Olinger motioned to recommend approval of the Subdivision Code with amendments to the proposed language. Seconded by Schumacher.

Motion passed unanimously.

August 19, 2019 Meeting Agenda

- a) Name suggestions for the park in the Wildflower Development.

Communications

Prchal said they are still continuing work in Lion's Park with the pickle ball courts. Olinger asked if they are still putting up the fence. Powers clarified that they are putting up boards next week around the pickle ball court and those will also serve as the boards for the hockey rink. Weeks said that a week ago there were 20 people playing pickle ball and he is happy with the public reaction.

Weeks brought up the public comments from last month's meeting about the soccer net in Easton Village. The day after that meeting Marty and Jamie from Public Works found an old soccer net that the City had and they put it up in Easton Village.

Powers said Public Works is going to repaint the light poles at Lion's Park this week. Weeks is surprised how much the volleyball courts are used.

Olinger was at Sunfish Park last weekend and it had not been fully mowed yet and that was supposed to happen. Powers said his crews just finished up everything they were going to mow in the last few days.

Prchal mentioned that the capstone for the 45th parallel at Lion's Park is coming along. Hopefully it will get installed this year.

Prchal said that Savona Park naming process will be coming up similar to the park in Wildflower. Weeks asked Powers how well the park signs hold up. Powers was not quite sure, the signs are composite type material, but they seem to hold up pretty well. Now that there is a process for naming these parks, Prchal wanted to Commission to start advertising to the public they are looking for name suggestions.

Prchal said the By-Laws got passed at the last Council meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Alex Saxe, Deputy Clerk**