

MINUTES

City of Lake Elmo Parks Commission

May 20, 2019

Members Present: Commissioners Olinger, Schumacher, Weeks, Zeno, Mayek, Ames and Nightingale

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Planner Prchal, Public Works Director Powers, Administrator Handt

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

Approval of Agenda

Ames requested to amend the agenda to a discussion about Kleis Park. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes approved as presented

Sunfish Lake Bike Trails

Planner Prchal gave an update on MN Land Trust approval since the January meeting. He pointed out that due to the time involved all of the maps in the RFP have not been updated yet however the map that was approved was dated 4/15/19 in the lower left hand corner. All of the maps would be updated before the RFP issued.

Prchal covered issues related to the soils, endangered species, existing trails and the proposed new trail plan. Staff is recommending the removal of some trails due to redundancy, environmental impacts and eliminates crossings. Parking areas and access to trails was presented.

Narrow trail (1-2 feet) is proposed in RFP. Prchal covered fiscal items such as cost and maintenance. Staff recommends approval of the Trail Plan and RFP to build new trails as presented.

Schumacher pointed out that Battle Creek has paved trails. Mayek pointed out there are both at Battle Creek.

Ames asked questions about number of crossings. There are a couple of places where they are very close together.

Schumacher can we get these crossing down further. Theodore Wirth Park has no crossings. Nightingale pointed out that some trails in the north at Theodore Wirth Park have some crossings.

Discussion on good trail design would include slowing mechanisms near the crossings.

Olinger had questions about the RFP. She questioned the use of machinery. Sec. 2.9 warranty period, she would like for it to be longer to 2 or 3 years. Will presentation to commission/council occur? Handt said there could be a joint meeting for the presentation. Olinger asked about removal beyond the narrow corridor. Sec. 8.2 can that be changed to not remove trees larger than 8 inches?

Zeno questioned removing two sections of trails on the far west side that offer challenging routes. Mayek responded that they see the most erosion and few people ski them. Schumacher likes the challenging trails as well.

Olinger asked how many miles someone could hike away from the bike trails. Prchal identified paths but didn't know the specific miles.

Public Comments:

Deb Krueger, 4452 Lake Elmo Ave N, concerned about biking. Reviewed other parks in the area that allowed and did not allow mountain biking.

Stuart Johnson, 3603 Lake Elmo Ave N, avid mountain biker, mountain bikers intend to leave a soft foot print. Narrow trails are better. Weekend trail maintenance is common volunteer opportunity.

Brenda Jo Carlson, 8554 Hidden Bay Trail, excited to see a lot of thought put into trail system, not a proponent of trails designed by random walkers. Why just a mountain bike trail? Should be all bikes, all hikers, all users.

Susan Dunn, 11018 Upper 33rd St N, mountain biking started in 2013 in Parks Commission discussion. Ordinance was passed that prohibited mountain biking. What happened to it? In the 1970s there were specific uses for parks purchased in the City. Sunfish is a nature park. This was a closed process since January.

David Morgan, 13780 Manning Trail N, chair of first parks commission in 1971. Sunfish was to be left as natural as possible. Terrain is steep. Liability for crashes. Citizens of Lake Elmo are more important than visitors.

Susan Saffle, 11180 50th St, park survey data shared. Walking and hiking was highest activity of usage from responders. Rare birds. Habitat loss. Maintenance costs-who will pay and will it be done consistently? Erosion concerns-severe soils prone to erosion. Will there be promotion of commercial uses such as renting out park for races, time trials.

Todd Williams, 3025 Lake Elmo Ave N, Sunfish should remain natural. Need a large area to remain natural. Council accepted Trail Guide Plan in 2006. Plan states bicycles and motorized uses prohibited from Sunfish Lake Park.

Joe Chavez, 3505 Kelvin Ave N, petition submitted to prohibit mountain biking trails in Sunfish Lake Park.

Joni Chavez, 3505 Kelvin Ave N, opposed to mountain bike trails is two fold-landlocked parcel may impact value of land. Father was one of the landowners that sold land for Sunfish Lake Park. Purpose was to create a nature preserve. Joni also submitted written comment.

Mary Frick, 2773 Lisbon Ave N, routinely in Sunfish and other parks at least once a week. Encountered some mountain bikes over the last year. Bikers come up on you quickly with little detectability (few seconds). Lake Elmo Park preserve has minutes to see the bikes. Dogs running loose. Concern bikers will go on other trails. Maintenance is an issue. Sees trees down for about a month. Construction and early use of trail creates 2/3 of disturbance.

Linda Keller, 4594 Lilac Lane N, birder, loves Sunfish Lake Park. Against biking in Sunfish. Concerned about safety. Where are accesses for emergency services? Training and extra personnel needed for extraction?

Ann Budcheck, 2301 Legion Ave, 2040 comp plan relevant areas-only two parks where mountain biking is allowed is in Pebble and Reid. April 4, 2013, Administrator Zueleger suggested keeping Sunfish a natural park. Ordinance prohibiting mountain biking. Soils limited. Blandings turtles in the area what will happen when they are nesting. Rust patch bumble bee area. Safety of crossings.

Brad Kopp, 2040 Manning Trail N, avid mountain biker. Biking community is not about destroying this park. One acre of physical trail is allocated, 0.5% of park. Great need for this. Over 40% increase in high school mountain biking teams in the last few years. Other trails but nothing like this is intended to be. Reid Park is also different as an entry for kids beginning. Riders slow down for crossings. Average 8-9 miles of speed. Trail builders know how to build trails that require minimal maintenance. Community driven and will volunteer. Work together.

Sarah Berkowitz, 11063 11th St N, love Sunfish for hiking and would also like to mountain bike there. It is a great park for that if trails are built right. Strong community willing to build trails and do maintenance. Parent of high school mountain biker.

Matt Lehmann, 218 Maple St W, Stillwater, representing SASCA. Addressed mountain biking culture. Mountain biking has changed. With a good trail design problems of the past go away.

Jeffrey Saffle, 11180 50th St, two different cultures-bikers and birders. Marginalize those who want to use the park for things other than mountain biking.

Ed Nielsen, 9498 Stillwater Blvd, dumb idea to put mountain biking in the best park in Lake Elmo. Woodbury only has one park suitable for mountain biking. Shared the uses in Sunfish Lake Park, does not include mountain biking. Shared letter to the city.

Kim Kandel, 3554 Kelvin Ct N, small portion of plant communities still in place today. Referenced DNR info from Sue Dunn. Won't be able to restore trails if this goes wrong. Concerned about dogs getting hurt.

Dick Wier, 3645 Laverne Ave N, viewed by MN Land Trust and they ok'ed it. If it was harmful to the park they wouldn't have approved it. Some slides showed foot traffic more harmful than bikes. Park should be open to everyone.

Ames motion seconded by Mayek to recommend approval of the Trail Plan and RFP to build the new trails which has been presented, within Sunfish Lake Park.

Ames understands from the city that biking is an allowed use in the park. Discussion should be around the proposal, not the use. Weeks asked administrator about issues raised that would prohibit mountain biking. Handt said the process of an ordinance being changed is reasonable, conservation easement does not prohibit mountain biking, 2040 Comp Plan has language that allows biking in Sunfish Lake Park.

Zeno recalls conservation easement he voted on included prohibition of mountain biking. Schumacher said Land Trust is not saying we should build it, only that we can.

Ames referenced the report in the packet regarding soils and erosion. If you can't bike in there you can't walk in there.

Olinger mentioned this issue keeps coming up year after year. It's not just a small group of people. The prohibition on mountain biking in 1990s was because of erosion due to them not being built properly.

Schumacher safety is still a concern. Should you overlay this on the existing park? Zeno not convinced safety is an issue at intersections if speed control is included. Speed control should be included in the RFP.

Motion passed 5-2.

2020-2024 Parks Commission Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Handt provided a summary of the 2020-2024 CIP.

Public Comments:

Mark Rubbert, 8740 9th Place N, support for Inwood Park. A neighborhood task force has been formed and is willing to help.

Motion by Olinger, seconded by Ames to proceed with lighting and security features for Pebble Park. Motion approved 7-0.

Zeno left the meeting.

Motion by Weeks, seconded by Olinger to recommend approval of 2020-2024 CIP as presented.
Motion passed 6-0.

Buckthorn Removal Grant

George Johnson requested approval to have Stantec prepare grant proposal for buckthorn management.

Ames motion to pursue this proposal from Stantec, seconded from Mayek. Motion passed 6-0.

Sunfish Lake Nature Center Patio Addition

Prchal summarized the patio proposal. Noted that it has been approved by the MN Land Trust.
Tony Manzara mentioned that a contractor was willing to donate the concrete patio.

Commissioners had questions about what was allowed in the lease agreement and when Manzara had to come back for approval. Handt read Article IV, section 8 regarding alterations.

Motion by Weeks, seconded by Ames to table until the June meeting. Motion passed 6-0.

Kleis Park

Ames inquired about the broken swing set at Kleis Park. Powers noted that it had been removed a couple of weeks ago. Replacement of the equipment will be evaluated in the future.

June Meeting Agenda

Sunfish Lake Nature Center Patio Addition
Parks Commission bylaws and policy
Mowing at Sunfish

Communications

New park construction in progress for this summer. Names will be solicited for park according to the new naming policy. Gravel roads to parks will be graded.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Kristina Handt**