

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
CITY OF RAMSEY  
ANOKA COUNTY  
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on April 12, 2018, at Ramsey City Council Chambers, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW.

Commission Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett  
Vice Chair Brandon Sis  
Commissioner Andrew Andrusko  
Commissioner Russell Bayer  
Commissioner Jennifer Leistico  
Commissioner Charles Tchuinkwa  
Commissioner Jon Trappen

Commission Members Absent: None

Also Present: Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Bennett called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**2. CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**3. APPROVE AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Bayer to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Leistico, Bayer, Andrusko, Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Tchuinkwa and Commissioner Trappen.

**4. APPROVE MINUTES**

**4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Commissioner Bayer, seconded by Commissioner Sis, to approve the following Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented:

- 1) Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes dated March 8, 2018.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Bayer, Sis, Andrusko, Leistico. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Tchuinkwa and Commissioner Trappen.

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Review Draft Comprehensive Plan Update**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan update. He briefly reviewed the elements of the update, including land use, transportation, sewer and water, natural resources, and others. Many of the Commissioners have participated in the public engagement pieces over the last year and a half. The purpose of tonight's update is to forward the draft Comp Plan's Parks Chapter to the Planning Commission and City Council, at which point it goes out for a six-month peer review by neighboring communities.

Mr. Riverblood reviewed a couple salient points in the Comp Plan that might be new for viewers. He noted that he would also like to discuss one proposed future park, where the landowner is opposed to that designation.

### **Commissioner Tchuinkwa and Commissioner Trappen arrived at approximately 6:40 p.m.**

Mr. Riverblood discussed recreation districts, established in 1992, which are aggregates of neighborhoods. Those borders have been reconfigured to reflect the reality on the ground today. He displayed a map showing the recreation districts for planning purposes. The Parks system plan, which drills down deeper and in greater detail than the Comp Plan, will be completed in 2018. That is separate from the Comp Plan. At that time, planning will happen on a more detailed level, whereas the Comp Plan is more of a macro-level. This system does not allow for a neighborhood park in every neighborhood; as the initial funding and ongoing maintenance are not possible. The Greenway system, however, connects the various areas of the city and makes the existing parks more accessible, more well-used, and easier to maintain. He pointed out the gaps in the Greenway and highlighted the plans to connect those segments.

Mr. Riverblood also highlighted a "search area" as a future community park. It would be a 40-acre or larger park, hopefully in association with Trott Brook.

Mr. Riverblood brought up the issue of landowner opposition to a City designation of park land. This area is between Bowers Drive and Alpaca Estates. It is a narrow area along the river. This someday may be developed for residential housing. The premise is that the area should have some access to the river, rather than just a couple homes having access to the river. All of those future residents should have access to the river and park space. If those homes do come forward, Park Dedication and Trail Fees will be due, along with the other City development fees. By identifying this area as proposed park, should the land use convert from agriculture to residential, the City would likely look to take Park Dedication in the form of land as opposed to cash.

Mr. Riverblood explained that the other way that the proposed land could remain in the public domain is if a particularly subdivision would have greater densities, necessitating open space. Another example is if it was a PUD that requires open space over and above Park Dedication. In any of those scenarios, it would be in the developer's best interests to see park space there. That particular land is in the Mississippi River critical area, which encourages land protection along sensitive areas. Riverblood continued that the landowner concerned about that is present tonight and may wish to speak to the Commission.

**Dave Nathe, Riverside Farms, 15238 Adams Street NW, Elk River; and also 144534 Llama Street;**

Mr. Nathe indicated he has lived in the area since 1971, and he purchased the farm in 1996. In 2003, he was approached for this bridge site that was supposed to come on the property. A plan was made so he knew where the development would be. The bridge site did not go through. In his opinion, taking that land for park will take all of his river lots. He stated that there are plenty of parks around, and many of them are empty. He indicated that he is already stuck with a solar farm, as a result of the County. And if this bridge site goes in, his land will not be worth anything.

Chair Bennett thanked Mr. Nathe for coming before the Commission and sharing his comments. He asked Mr. Riverblood to point out Mr. Nathe's land on an overhead map.

Chair Bennett asked whether there are proposed changes for this area, from the 2030 to the 2040 Comp Plan. Mr. Riverblood indicated the proposed park plan for the area in question remains the same from the 2030 Comp Plan, and even prior to that in the City's park planning.

Chair Bennett stated the existing plan was written ten years ago. This is a plan, and it is not anyone's intention to take land; rather, it established a plan for a future developer that provides them a framework within which they may think about a particular development. This is a guideline and establishes a plan in an effort to highlight some of the things the City is trying to accomplish. He reiterated that it is not anyone's desire to take any land from the landowner.

Mr. Riverblood confirmed that is the case. He noted that April 26<sup>th</sup> is open for Mr. Nathe to meet with himself and the Community Development Director. Additionally, the next step for this part of the Comp Plan process is a presentation before the Planning Commission and City Council in May. Those are additional opportunities to express concern in addition to April 26<sup>th</sup>, as well as during the six months of peer community review.

Mr. Nathe stated Alpaca Estates has no park. It was put it in the 70s, but he should not be held accountable for having a park in his land, when he could have river lots. Residents could have docks on the river. There is a sandy beach, which would be available to all those who live there. Right now, it is used as farm ground. The trees that are left down there are not that great, which is not ideal for a park.

Commissioner Sis asked about the route of the proposed bridge.

Mr. Riverblood pointed out the proposed area for the bridge. He noted it is not something the Park and Recreation Commission would be expected to weigh in on. It would be coming from an area of new intersection and cross over into Dayton.

Chair Bennett stated the bridge has been discussed, but it is out of the purview of the Parks Commission. He also explained the Comp Plan peer review process.

Mr. Riverblood added that developers, when they purchase land, want to know what is desired there by the City. Many developers understand that park space adds value to all the lots in the subdivision, rather than adding sole value to a premium area. He also put on the overhead an earlier planning exercise for Sunfish Lake, as an example to illustrate what park space could look like on Mr. Nathe's land. He pointed out it could mean a trail easement through the area, or a trail down in the protected bluff zone, which might not be visible from the residential lots. There are several options that dedicated park space might eventually look like. It all depends on what the character of the development might look like.

Chair Bennett commented that the Park and Rec Commission often works with developers and their proposals. As part of the Comp Plan committee, the Commission is looking to ensure a connected community with park resources for all. Maintaining the rural and natural character for Ramsey is part of the mission statement of the Comp Plan. If this area gets developed, this Commission would work with the developer to ensure that whatever the park space potentially looks like will meet the needs of the developer, the landowner, and the folks looking to build and live there.

Mr. Nathe stated it is his understanding that developers have a choice to donate the land or pay the park fees; he would plan to pay the park fees rather than donate the land.

Chair Bennett thanked Mr. Nathe for coming to the meeting and sharing concerns.

Chair Bennett noted that the Comp Plan process has been exhaustive at this point, with a lot of citizen input. The plan is in alignment with what the citizens have expressed. Hopefully the Park and Rec Commission will be able to work with Mr. Nathe and also stay true to the 2040 Comp Plan going forward

Mr. Riverblood suggested that over half of the City's parks are where they are at because they were shown as proposed designations, such that when development came forward, the City was able to communicate to the buyer what was intended there. Oftentimes, the proposed park areas are what drives the developer to buy the space.

Commissioner Andrusko stated one of the main concerns during his time on the Planning Commission, related to developments, was where would the children play. That continues to be a priority for the Park and Rec Commission. Right now, there is not a great way to cross Highway 10. The kids need to be considered throughout this process.

Commissioner Sis asked what drives the alignment of the park space dedication. He wondered whether a different bridge alignment, perhaps north-south, would be more amenable to Mr. Nathe and would preserve the shoreland that he is concerned about.

Mr. Riverblood responded that the preponderance of the Mississippi River is already taken up by single-family homes, with the exception of King's Island and Mississippi West Regional Park. There will likely be hundreds of families living in close proximity to the proposed park along the river. Lining up 4 or 6 or 12 homes allows those residents the benefit of the resource, but it shuts off the resource to the hundreds of families in that same area. From a developer's standpoint, having the river access spread out over 300 to 500 homes means that every home value increases more than \$10,000. Mr. Nathe had commented on the 300-foot setback. That is part of the critical river areas corridor, which is a planning distinction that says the resource needs to be protected. That is where the layers of planning come in, to cause the City to be prudent about protecting that resource in perpetuity. As a prospective homeowner, if maintaining just an individual lawn is the priority, there are hundreds of homes along the Mississippi regularly for sale with private access to the river.

Chair Bennett stated a goal of the Comp Plan is to develop parks and communities and have something for everyone. The river is a prominent resource in this community, but it is not leveraged by many people. This could be a really unique development with some really interesting amenities, and everyone in the City of Ramsey would benefit from it.

Mr. Riverblood noted there clearly would be those internal neighborhood connections to the space under consideration. Roads and sidewalks and all those things are looked at when a development comes forward. Developers want to know what the plans are for the area. Developers do not want to buy a \$1 million tract of property, to then invest millions of dollars in it, to make a 4 or 6 or 8 percent margin of profit, only to be surprised by the City's plans.

Chair Bennett reiterated that this was also part of the 2030 Comp Plan.

Commissioner Sis asked whether there was a Comp Plan prior to the 2030 version.

Mr. Riverblood responded there had been Comp Plans dating back to the establishment of the Met Council right after 1967. However, the Comp Plans continue to get more sophisticated with each iteration. Twenty or thirty years ago, this community had nowhere near the density. The character of the community continues to change, and the densities continue to change, which drives up the need for park spaces, particularly for needs within the urban service area. Similar to the recreation districts.

Motion by Commissioner Andrusko, seconded by Commissioner Bayer, to approve the draft recommendations for the Parks and Recreation section of the 2040 Comp Plan as written.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Andrusko, Bayer, Leistico, Sis, Tchuinkwa, Trappen. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

## **5.02: Recommend Park Dedication for Rum River Prairie**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated this subdivision is a good representative of what was just discussed, as residential densities decrease moving north and west in the city. The developer is proposing 25 single-family lots, most of them averaging about 2.5 acres per lot. Staff recommends that Park Dedication and Trail Fees consist of a cash payment, however, that the City also work with the developer to extend the trail from the area that they are required to build the trail, along Armstrong Blvd north and northwesterly up to 173<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. That area of the plat, approximately 1800 feet, beyond the plat boundary would be credit-eligible toward Trail Fees first, and then Park Dedication fees if the trail fees did not cover it.

Mr. Riverblood noted this has received preliminary plat and is awaiting final plat submittal documents before it goes before the City Council.

Chair Bennett noted this plan is an illustration of the City working with the developer to meet the needs of the specific development.

Commissioner Bayer commented that the trail currently goes all the way to Autumn Heights, which is just southeast of the proposed development. The trail is on the east side of the road. He asked whether the trail continue to 173<sup>rd</sup> on that side of the road.

Mr. Riverblood responded that ideally, it would remain on the east side. There are also power poles there. The developer would say he wants to do it on the east side. It is a fairly high-speed roadway, County Road 83. These pedestrian crossings are important, because safety is a priority, but they are not possible at every single crossing. All these developments also go forward to the County for approval.

Commissioner Trappen inquired about the fees being charged to the developer.

Mr. Riverblood responded the City staff works with the developer's engineering staff to come to an agreement on the actual costs. The City plans on \$50/linear foot on average to build a 10-foot bituminous trail, by the time all aspects of a constructing a trail are considered.

Motion by Commissioner Bayer, seconded by Commissioner Sis, that Park Dedication consist of cash, and that the Developer of Rum River Prairie be required to extend the trail from the Plat, north to 173<sup>rd</sup> Avenue—with this segment credit eligible against the Trail Fees owed.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Bayer, Sis, Andrusko, Leistico, Tchuinkwa, Trappen. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

### **5.03: Consider Park and Recreation Commission Outdoor Meeting Schedule**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated the Park and Rec Commission has used the summer meetings as opportunities to visit the parks, interact with residents, and these meetings are enjoyable times for the Commission. For inclement weather, the Commission meets in Council chambers.

Chair Bennett stated the Commission definitely looks forward to these meetings in the parks. He is comfortable with the meeting schedule.

The Commissioner agreed with the proposed summer meeting schedule.

## **6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided no updates.

Chair Bennett inquired about the readiness of sports fields, given the inclement weather.

Mr. Riverblood stated that in normal years, the athletic associations have been very good about staying off the fields so as to avoid turf damage. But this year, the weather has been so inclement that it is now getting close to game time, which generally begins the first week of May. Probably, some fields will be beat up this year. If the snow this weekend does not materialize, then perhaps things will green up. Usually, Ramsey begins mowing a few of the warmer spaces with good soils as soon as the last week in April. That will not happen this year.

Chair Bennett cautioned all of the viewers to do the athletes a favor and stay off the fields as long as possible to ensure a good, long playing season.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Bayer, seconded by Commissioner Trappen, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Bayer, Trappen, Andrusko, Leistico, Tchuinkwa, Trappen. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Allison Burr  
*TimeSaver off Site Secretarial, Inc.*