

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on October 11, 2018, at Ramsey City Council Chambers, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW.

Commission Members Present: Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Russell Bayer
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Jon Trappen

Commission Members Absent: Chair Shane Bennett

Also Present: Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Sis called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

Bruce Anderson, 14892 Bison Street, NW, asked about the status of the splash pad and the parks along The Waterfront. He indicated he would like work to be done as soon as possible, especially on the splash pad, before the senior building is completed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided an update on Municipal Plaza and The Waterfront, noting that the Commission spent over two hours on this very issue at the August meeting. The outcome was to recommend to the Council the next level of plans. That particular analysis had cost estimates with it. He would agree with Mr. Anderson that elements of the parks should begin soon. The City is in conversation with the developer of the 154-unit development. The goal is to move forward with basic park improvements. There will be some phasing with Municipal Plaza and The Waterfront. Parking will also be an important concern. It will be important to apprise the Planning Commission on what the Park and Rec Commission has been working on this past year.

Mr. Anderson responded that all the City Commissions need to get down together and talk about these big projects in the City. There is not much information coming out to the residents. He questioned whether residents even know about park priorities and schedules.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

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

1) Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes dated September 13, 2018.

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

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Recommend an Analysis and Finding on Community Center Options

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided an overview of the discussion regarding a possible future community center. What must be investigated further, is whether there is support for a centralized location or decentralized locations, for a public/private partnership, programming models, and many other variables. He would like the Commission to recommend that the Council consider these questions, and take a year if necessary, to endeavor on a strategic approach to define the questions/options/alternatives for the community. He would like staff to develop an executive summary that is easy for residents to read. He also noted that it tends to be easy to support the concept of a community center, but the public needs to realize how expensive they are to operate. He concluded by saying that the Boards and Commissions are comprised of residents, and they represent a significant way that residents are getting involved with this process.

Vice Chair Sis asked whether there has been consideration in City budgeting for a community center.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded the community center has been discussed by residents and policymakers for many years. What happens is that it goes in the CIP and it is shown as a possible price tag of \$8-12 million, and during the discussion of the CIP, and it is realized there is no budget for it. Subsequently, it is decided that items without a budget should not be in the CIP. Then the community center is removed, but then the discussion comes back around again. Thus, the goal is to have better financial figures and better describe the actual project. Whatever outcomes results from the analysis will be very good information.

John LeTourneau, Acting Mayor for City of Ramsey, stated this is an election season. As enjoyable as it is to be out in the community talking with residents, he hears frequently the need for a Community Center. The prospect of bringing a community center forward for more analysis is a great idea. It looks like this community is now ready to have this conversation. He will support this discussion that needs to happen as to whether this is the right time and what it might look like.

Motion by Commissioner Trappen, seconded by Commissioner Bayer, to recommend to the City Council that additional analysis be performed on the significant investigation and reports resulting from the Resilient Communities Project with the University of Minnesota on the potential of a Community Center in Ramsey

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

5.02: Consider a Plan to Incent Voluntary Trail Easement Acquisition

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood introduced a discussion of opportunities to fill gaps in the Circle of Ramsey Greenway, by inviting landowners to consider voluntarily conveying trail easements within the cattail wetland west of Variolite Street. It is important to stress, that this would be an entirely voluntary easement dedication, and landowners would be compensated for the easement area within the wetland. Staff could begin the process by hosting an open house with landowners who may be interested. Gifting land to an organization may be a tax-deductible contribution; that is one possibility.

Vice Chair Sis suggested this is a great way to complete the Circle of Ramsey.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood discussed various possible configurations of an easement, specifically how it might work out with a stream crossing. He noted that other than the publishing of this case, the next step is for Council approval. Everyone needs to understand this is a voluntary opportunity.

Commissioner Leistico asked whether the City has handled other acquisitions this way.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded in 2004, a \$2 million award was granted from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources to purchase voluntary conservation and trail easements along Trott Brook. As it turned out, the award was reduced to \$500,000. Those funds were invested along Trott Brook in voluntary trail easement acquisitions.

Vice Chair Sis asked if there has been any pushback.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded he is not aware of any concerns or problems.

Motion by Commissioner Bayer, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to forward the concept to incent voluntary trail easement acquisitions to City Council for further discussion and potential approval.

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

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided an update on the City website, which includes many free or low-cost activities such as yoga classes, art classes, and meditation classes. The meditation class benefits an interesting cross-section of the community. Some folks are in meditation as recommended by their health care professionals, and a lot of veterans with PTSD are involved. The instructor donates his time to conduct these classes, because meditation helped him with some recovery. There has been some discussion about these classes, so he wanted to clarify.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Allison Burr
TimeSaver off Site Secretarial, Inc.