

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on May 9, 2019, at Ford Brook Park, 5459 180th Ave NW.

Commission Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Trixy Barnes
 Commissioner Nathan Barten
 Commissioner Russell Bayer
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Jennifer Shoemaker

Commission Members Absent: None

Also Present: Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bennett welcomed those in attendance.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

This item was considered as part of item 5.01 of the agenda.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Bayer, Barnes, Barten, Leistico, Shoemaker. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Barten, to approve the April 11, 2019, Park and Rec Commission meeting minutes as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Leistico, Barten, Barnes, Bayer, Shoemaker, Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Conduct 'Listening Session' within the neighborhood on proposed renovations for Ford Brook Park

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated the purpose of the listening session is to gather information on any and all of the neighborhood's desires for parks and trails, and specifically for Ford Brook Park. He provided the history behind the park and noted the park has been in the CIP for a number of years. It is currently scheduled for some renovations in approximately 2020. The primary purpose tonight is to hear ideas about the park improvements from the neighborhood so the City does not make presumptuous about the playground. He also noted Rum River Central is a regional park, and is about a mile east from Ford Brook. It has a many amenities, including a shelter and a significant play structure. He noted that the Ford Brook equipment was salvaged from the City of Minneapolis a long time ago.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood acknowledged the Mayor LeTourneau is present along with Councilmember Heinrich, along with Nowthen Mayor Jeff Pilon and Nowthen Councilmember Dan Breyen from Nowthen.

An unidentified resident asked whether a proposed budget has been established.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded there is a planning dollar amount in the CIP. However, anything that moves forward has to be approved by the City Council. The project estimate is shown at \$70,000. It has also been suggested that other funding sources may be available due to proximity to Nowthen. Also, there is special program by the MN DNR for park improvements. Traditional playground equipment is exceedingly expensive. It's many tens of thousands of dollars for basic things. Any time public spaces are improved, they need to become ADA compliant. That means pathways along with parking spaces, for example, and that can add many several thousands of dollars just for the ADA elements.

Chair Bennett asked about Elmcrest, which has newer equipment. It has a good mix of equipment and inquired about the cost.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood recalled that the border around the playground as well as the playground itself was \$90,000. That did not include any parking.

An unidentified resident asked if the City of Nowthen has been contacted for partnership opportunities.

Nowthen Mayor Pilon introduced himself, along with Councilmember Dan Breyen.

Nowthen Councilmember Breyen stated Nowthen's Park and Rec Committee discussed this a few years ago.

Nowthen Mayor Pilon concurred this was brought up about three or four years ago. Discussion was held regarding extending the park into Nowthen, in order to help justify Nowthen's expenditures.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood added that staff reached out to the Nowthen Lions, who had expressed some interest in working with the Park Board.

An unidentified resident said this is the same equipment she grew playing on, over 40 years ago. She would like to see every piece of the equipment gone. The equipment has been painted 15-20 times. It would be nice to have all new equipment. Safety concerns were mentioned regarding the concrete pipes.

One unidentified resident has asked for the equipment to be tested for lead. She asked how many layers were tested when the original testing was conducted by the City. She is not clear how many layers deep were tested.

Chair Bennett asked whether there is a big enough safety concern that the equipment should be removed right now, and it would be a blank space until improvements 2020. Safety is his number 1 concern. If the neighborhood feels that concerned about safety, perhaps that is a real alternative.

One unidentified resident said new families are moving into these homes, and so it would be important to have a space for the kids to get together. A promise from the City would be needed.

One unidentified resident stated he can hear the kids playing and enjoying the park. Kids bike here and having a good time.

Chair Bennett asked for specifics for the previous lead testing.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded the City scraped paint and it was sent out for testing. Lead contamination would have shown up, given the vigorosity of the testing. He noted that falling on a sidewalk or concrete steps at a park would be no different than falling anywhere else. It is safe, though it is tired and merits replacement.

An unidentified resident asked about people with access to machines who would be willing to help tear things out free of charge.

Several residents mentioned it is difficult to watch other neighborhoods get new play equipment when Ford Brook receives nothing.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated the new playgrounds are usually associated with new subdivisions, which are required to pay a substantial fee to the Park Trust Fund for every new home. The new playgrounds are almost never paid for by tax dollars, but are fees collected from developers.

Chair Bennett noted that is a challenge of the Park and Rec Commission. The question is how to get on a plan to address aging equipment. There is a strategy adopted to focus on the larger regional parks and to build connectivity over time. The smaller “pocket” parks like Ford Brook are hard and costly to maintain, and they are not utilized by everyone either. There are a lot of factors. He commended the neighbors for coming out to voice their concerns. That makes him want to be committed to getting this project done.

Councilmember Nadine Heinrich stated this is something that residents told her when she door-knocked this summer. Residents have also told her about the prior advocacy for this park; thus, this park is a priority for her. The great collaboration that is happening here is exciting. Decisions need to be made on the cement safety piece. She thanked Commission members for coming out to the park and interacting with the site and the residents. She also thanked the City of Nowthen for its willingness to collaborate. She asked the residents’ opinion on considering something different for this park. Walking trails have been mentioned through Nowthen and through this space. Should this also be something different and unique? Should something more nature-based be considered? There are other things that can be done with the space that could lower the cost but still make it functional for children from infancy to teenagers. She recently visited the Kansas City Science Museum, where there is a simple flat wooden surface with many levels. There were a number of people playing on this simple structure. She was also in Washington, DC, and saw the structure that you walk under. There are unique things that promote imaginative play. She asked for resident feedback.

An unidentified resident stated they don’t expect to have a several-story high play equipment -- just some updated traditional play equipment.

An unidentified resident added that the wooden structure would be a great alternative to the concrete pipes. There are so many things they could imagine.

An unidentified resident asked about the brainstorming process.

Chair Bennett stated when Elmcrest was constructed, a session was conducted just like this. Multiple vendors came in, and the community came in, and everyone looked at the different play structures. Ultimately, the Park and Rec Commission will approve a plan and send it to the Council City for final approval and execution.

An unidentified resident stated a partnership with the City of Nowthen would be wonderful.

Nowthen Councilmember Breyen stated Nowthen has installed a park with the Lions, with much volunteer support in the community as well.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented this is a good segue to the next steps. Regarding Elmcrest, a detailed RFP was developed. That process lends itself very well to deciding what has to be done by professionals, and what can be aided by volunteer partnerships. There is an opportunity to be part of the evaluation process of the RFP’s.

An unidentified resident asked how residents will be informed about upcoming meetings.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated there are comment cards available tonight, and he encouraged everyone to complete those cards with contact information. For tonight's meeting, a flyer was sent out to 75 homes. If people can submit contact information, then a group email list can be built, so there does not have to be a mailer ahead of time, which can be a bit of a laborious, and costly process.

Multiple residents stated walking and/or biking trails would be very welcome.

Several unidentified residents stated that maintaining the neighborhood park would be important. The fact that there are parks within a mile is nice, but that does not replace the importance of this neighborhood park.

Several residents expressed support for staying committed to the park and not letting it go.

It was agreed that the community support expressed for the park improvements will help keep it front of mind.

One unidentified resident asked about a timeline.

Chair Bennett responded that these things do not always follow the stated timeline. He stated it could be in the plan in 2020, but it could be earlier or later. The RFP process can be lengthy. Adding in volunteer elements can add more time.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood again encouraged the participants to complete the comment cards so they can be on the email list for updates.

Chari Bennett thanked the Mayors and Councilmembers for attending from Ramsey and Nowthen. His biggest takeaway is the residents' passion for the park. He asked if a motion is in order.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated there is a good consensus input. He proposed that staff organize the thoughts in bullet point fashion, identify what collaborative efforts might exist, and map out a timeline that would deliver a project for early in 2020. He would also like to look at the National Night Out in August 2020, and that could potentially serve as the ribbon-cutting.

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

There was no Commission/staff input.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Leistico, Bayer, Barnes, Barten, Shoemaker. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Allison Burr
TimeSaver off Site Secretarial, Inc.